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# JEEVADHARA

## THE MIGRATION CRISIS

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Edited by

Shaji George Kochuthara

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# *Jeevadhara*

*A JOURNAL FOR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESEARCH*

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## **The Migration Crisis**

Edited by:

**Shaji George Kochuthara**

Malloossery P. O.,

Kottayam - 686 041

Kerala, India

Tel: (91) (481) 2392530, 2397017

Mob: 9495519775

E-mail: [jcmanalel@gmail.com](mailto:jcmanalel@gmail.com)

Web: [www.jeevadhara.org](http://www.jeevadhara.org)

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## Editorial

Though migration is not a new phenomenon, it has dramatically increased in recent years - more than 214 million international migrants and 740 million internal migrants as per 2010 statistics - bringing about drastic changes in global demographics, religion, culture, politics and economics. There are well-to-do people who migrate looking for better opportunities. But, the vast majority of them are compelled to migrate due to utter poverty or unemployment or political instability in their homeland. On the one hand, migration offers new hopes and new opportunities of growth and development. On the other hand, many of them are subjected to rejection, discrimination, unfair labour practices, sexual harassment, etc. That many of the migrants are illegal adds to their sufferings. Moreover, being uprooted from their social, cultural and religious contexts most of them undergo profound crises. In many countries, even basic healthcare is denied to them, especially if they are undocumented. Poverty and migration pose significant challenges to governments, human rights, justice as well as the pastoral care of the Church. Discussions on migration often revolve around economy, national identity and national security. Moreover, these discussions are led by politicians, economists and sociologists, whereas religions and faith traditions play only a nominal role.

In recent years, the discussion on migration came to the centre stage particularly due to the Refugee crisis in Europe, prompted mainly by the political unrest in West Asia and North Africa. The debate is still continuing. At the same time, though in different levels, similar situations exist in different parts of the world. The issue of Rohingya Refugee crisis only one last example.

In this number of *Jeevadhara* we invite the attention of our readers to the issue of migration and its ethical implications. The first two articles present two concrete examples of internal migration in India. Saju M.D. presents the issue of migrant labourers in the state of Kerala. He

discusses their working conditions, nutrition and health and social exclusion to depict the plight of the migrant population. Though he analyses the issue basically from sociological perspectives, he also highlights the ethical issues involved. PremXalxo discusses the socio-cultural, religious and ethical issues involved in the migration of tribal boys and girls from central and northern parts of India to the metropolitan cities. On the basis of some concrete case studies, he analyses the factors behind such migration, and future prospects built on hope.

Tomy Thomas Kattampally argues that rereading of the biblical texts alluding to migration can enlighten and inspire the church today in its response to the migrants. This analysis, he hopes, can lead the Church to a renewed commitment to extend helping hands to the migrants. Ansa George and Shaji George Kochuthara give an overview of Pope Francis' teaching on migration. The Pope's concern for migrants has been expressed through his messages and powerful gestures and actions. For Pope Francis, hospitality to migrants and solidarity with them is an ethical imperative here and now. René M. Micallef reflects on Pope Francis' invitation to Catholic universities to respond to the situation of today's migrants and refugees. After briefly surveying Catholic Social Thought and providing some statistics on human mobility, the article encourages teachers to include this topic in their teaching. Following this, Micallef proposes some elements of a teaching "ethos" on human mobility from personal experience.

Migration is no more something that happens somewhere else occasionally. It has become a part of our every day life. In our day-to-day life we meet many migrants who are in need of our compassion, understanding, hospitality and fraternity, and solidarity with them. Hence, above all, the question to be considered is our response to the migrants here and now. The need of the migrants who are helpless, is the criterion of our responsibility and responsible response towards them. That is the ethical imperative here and now.

**Shaji George Kochuthara**

Dharmaram College

Bangalore 560029



# **Migration: Ethical Dilemmas and Social Work**

**Saju M.D**

Kerala is becoming the host of domestic migrant labourers (DML) from across the country, the majority hailing from 5 states, namely West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. This article deals with the issues and challenges of undocumented migrants, Social Work models with Migrant labourers and the Ethical Dilemmas in Social Work practice. This article provides key findings of a study conducted by Rajagiri College of Social Sciences in three domains: working conditions, nutrition and health and social exclusion to depict the plight of the migrant population and the social work response to their needs. There are three levels of dilemma depicts, dilemma of the government, the socially sensitive institutions and the professional working with them. The proposed model of social work response is based on networking and synergy.

Dr. Saju M D CMI (MPhil and PhD in Social Work) is Asst professor in the department of social work, Rajagiri College of Social Sciences (autonomous). He was awarded Research Fellowships by Melbourne University, Australia for the year 2016 - 2017 and former research associate in the Institute of Psychiatry, UK for a period of three years from 2008. He has presented papers in many International and National Conferences. At present he is Administrator and Finance officer of the college and is the Secretary for education of the SH Province, Kochi.

## **Introduction**

Human mobility for want of better job prospects and living conditions is as old as human history. International migration has become common and easier due to advancement in modern transportation and enhanced interconnectedness among various countries across the globe. Conflict, poverty, inequality and lack of decent jobs also contribute to migration.

International migration report, 2015 reported a rapid growth of international migrants worldwide reaching to 244 million in 2015, up from 222 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000 (United Nations, 2015).

India has the largest diaspora in 2015 with 16 million international migrants. According to the Kerala Migration Survey 2014 the number of Kerala emigrants living abroad in 2014 is estimated to be about 24.0 lakhs, up from 22.8 lakhs in 2011, 21.9 lakhs in 2008, 18.4 lakhs in 2003 and 13.6 lakhs in 1998.<sup>1</sup>

Any discussion on migration focuses more on the outward migration and international migration. However, Kerala has witnessed a sweeping high rate of inward migration from domestic migration in the last decade. More than 90% of the 25 lakh migrants are in the 18-35 age group with 41% belonging to the 18-23 age group.<sup>2</sup> Any discussion on youth in Kerala cannot ignore the migrant youth.

The rapid urbanization and expansion of urban informal sector, and opportunities arising out of international migration of local people and reluctance of educated unemployed Kerala youth to work in so called menial jobs contributed to the insurgence of domestic migrant labour in Kerala<sup>3</sup> 75% of them hailing from 5 states namely West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa.

Migration has implications for those who move, those left behind and for those who host them. This paper tries to explore the issues and challenges of migration and tries to draw a feasible model of social work interventions and the major ethical issues related to migration.

### **Profile of Domestic Migrant Labour in Kerala**

According to a comprehensive study done by Gulati institute of Finance and Taxation, 25 lakhs domestic migrant labourers reside in

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<sup>1</sup> K. C. Zachariah, S. Irudaya, Rajan, "Dynamics of Emigration and Remittances In Kerala: Results from the Kerala Migration Survey 2014," Centre for Development Studies, Working paper, 2015, 463. Retrieved from <http://cds.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/WP463.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> D. Narayana, G.S. Venkiteswaran, and M.P. Joseph, "Domestic Migrant Labour in Kerala," Gulati Institute of Finance and taxation, Thiruvananthapuram, 2013, Retrieved from <http://www.lc.kerala.gov.in/images/Current/ismstudy.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *Frontline* 30, 26, 10-01-2013.



Kerala, of which 40.95% belongs to the age group of 18-23, 34.29% to 24-29 and 15.65% to 30-35. That means more than 90% of them are in their youthful ages.<sup>4</sup>

The study provides the following insights about DML in Kerala. Almost equal number of DML stayed in their current residences for more than 3 years, 2-3 years, 1-2 years and less than 1 year. The internal mobility of the DML are high as they often move from one place to another during their stay in the state. Sixty six per cent of them work under contractors. Majority of them work in construction work followed by working in hotel and restaurants. No unemployment or underemployment was reported among the DML and 28.7% of them works all days in week while majority of them (57.82%) works 6 days in a week. Almost one-third of them earn Rs. 400 and more per day. Their remittances to home range from Rs. 1000-5000 to more than Rs. 20000 per month.

### **Issues and Challenges of Youth Domestic Migrant Labourers in Kerala**

A brief overview of some of the concerns and challenges of DML in Kerala is depicted below.

#### **Vulnerability of DML**

As quoted in Ajith Kumar,<sup>5</sup> Bustamante (2011) points out that, migrants are inherently vulnerable as subjects of human rights from the time they leave home to initiate their migration. In other words, any human being is less vulnerable at home than right after he leaves it to become a migrant. The same applies to the sociological extension of the notion of home to a community of origin. The same person that migrates had more resources, both material and human, to defend and/or protect, himself, when he

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<sup>4</sup> Narayana, Venkiteswaran, and Joseph, "Domestic Migrant labour in Kerala."

<sup>5</sup> Ajith Kumar, "Vulnerability of migrants and Responsiveness of the State: The Case of Unskilled Migrant Workers in Kerala, India," Working Paper No. 26 November 2011. Centre for Socio-economic & Environmental Studies. Retrieved from <http://csesindia.org/admin/modules/cms/docs/publication/29.pdf>

was at home, prior to moving elsewhere, than after the outward movement had taken place.<sup>6</sup>

According to Derose et al (2007), vulnerability is shaped by many factors, including political and social marginalization and a lack of socioeconomic and societal resources.<sup>7</sup> Varennes (2003) states that

living in host states where they (migrants) may not master the official language(s), are unfamiliar with the workings of the legal system and administration, detached from traditional support and family networks, exposed to a society with ways of life or cultures which they may find at times alien, they may face trials that can leave them disoriented and disturbed.<sup>8</sup>

### Housing and Living Conditions

The housing and living conditions of the DML are abysmally poor. They often live in the worksites and factories itself, in crowded rooms with poor water supply and sanitation facilities. Only a few of the rooms have proper kitchens. Cooking, bathing etc. takes place mostly in the open. The poor living conditions create potential threat for their lives and have raised fears of the spread of diseases among the local people.<sup>9</sup> Remittance records showed that 80% of their income is remitted to their family in the state of origin. Their concern about their family and willingness to sacrifice basic facilities for the sake of their family and not retaining money for accommodation is reason for water borne diseases and vector borne diseases that is seen very high in this

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<sup>6</sup> A. Bustamante Jorge, "Extreme Vulnerability of Migrants: The Cases of the United States and Mexico", *Migraciones Internacionales*, Vol. 6, N0. 1 (2011), accessed from [http://www2.colef.mx/migracionesinternacionales/revistas/MI20/MI\\_20-97-118.pdf](http://www2.colef.mx/migracionesinternacionales/revistas/MI20/MI_20-97-118.pdf) on 14-8-2011.

<sup>7</sup> Derose Kathryn Pitkin, José J. Escarce and Nicole Lurie (2007), "Immigrants And Health Care: Sources of Vulnerability," *Health Affairs*, 26, No. 5 (2007): 1258-1268.

<sup>8</sup> Varennes de Fernand, "Strangers in Foreign Lands: Diversity, Vulnerability and the Rights of Migrants," 2003, [http://www.unesco.org/most/paper\\_devarennes.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/most/paper_devarennes.pdf) (accessed on 12-7-2011).

<sup>9</sup> Narayana, Venkiteswaran, and Joseph, "Domestic Migrant labour in Kerala."



population. That is, they are willing to subject themselves to risks, deprivation and suffering for the sake of their families (parents, spouse, children) not realizing the long-term implication to the exposure to hazards that will affect their health and consequently the capacity to work and continue to earn and remit money to family. This is the ethical dilemma of the migrant worker. So the project officer needs to enable the migrant worker to reconcile between short term and long-term obligations. If accommodation is provided its expense is cut from wages but the migrant worker may prefer to get the cash in order to send bigger amount to the family.

### **Social Security and Health Schemes**

Movement from their host communities takes away several of their social security entitlements such as subsidized food through the public distribution system, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), a health insurance scheme for poor, limited access to education etc.<sup>10</sup>

They also lack legal protection as most of them work in unorganized sector. The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (1979) provides legal protection to the migrant worker as provisions for equality of wages, displacement allowance equivalent to half month wages, journey allowance to meet the travel from place of residence to place of work as also wages during the period of such journeys, duty of the contractor to provide and maintain suitable residential accommodation, etc. Most of the DML are unaware of these provisions and often fails to any social protection. Many other Acts applicable to any worker is applicable to the DML also. Some of the Acts are Minimum Wages Act, Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, Workmen's Compensation Act, Payment of Wages Act, Factories Act. Despite having several legislations to protect the rights of migrant labourers violations of the provisions are rampant in the state.

### **Leisure activities**

Lack of leisure activities is yet another problem faced by the DML. Many of them work for 12-14 hours per day. They don't find any time

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<sup>10</sup> Kumar, "Vulnerability of migrants and Responsiveness of the State..."



for relaxation and entertainment except on a Sunday, that too a quarter of them work 7 days a week. They have no common place for recreation. Lack of recreational activities along with characteristics of population such as young, living away from families and lack of opportunities to meet emotional and sexual needs pose threat in terms of high risk sexual behaviours. The GIFT report quotes the volunteers of Kerala State Aids Control Society as saying that “the sudden influx of migrant male population into Kerala, who earn wages and has extra money to spend, has given a boost to local sex industry. Prostitution is rampant among them, but is carried out under veils of secrecy; moreover, they also are careful not to invite the wrath of local moral policing. All this, along with the total lack of knowledge about safe sex and the use of condoms, make them a section that is very vulnerable to fatal infections and diseases. A vast majority of them have not even heard of HIV or AIDS.”<sup>11</sup>

## Health

Health of DML and that of the local community is a major concern for Health Department in the state. A newspaper article reported a genuine concern in the morbidity pattern among the migrant workers and the still to be validated fear that they could become carriers of infectious diseases. The health hazards posed by the pathetic hygienic conditions in which they live have evoked disgust and resentment among the local population.<sup>12</sup> Crowded and unhygienic living conditions compromise the health of the DML. In a two day camp conducted by the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences with the support of labour department identified Scabies, a contagious skin disease, and body pain resulting from intense physical labour among many of the migrant workers screened at the construction site of the upcoming TCS campus inside Infopark Kochi.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Narayana, Venkiteswaran, and Joseph, “Domestic Migrant labour in Kerala.”

<sup>12</sup> C.G. Nair, “Migrants in the Land of Expatriates, *The Hindu*, 23 August 2015, Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala-migrants-in-the-land-of-expatriates/article7569723.ece>

<sup>13</sup> “Health Problems Dog Migrant Workers in City,” *The Hindu* June 28, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/health-problems-dog-migrant-workers-in-city/article3579478.ece>

The re-emergence of diseases like Malaria, Kala Azar, which were eradicated from Kerala is often attributed to the migrant labourers as a number of cases have been identified among the DML in various parts of the state.

Sexually transmitted diseases which were not prevalent in Kerala until now are making an entry into the state through migrant labourers, according to Kerala State AIDS Control Society (KSACS) statistics. In Thiruvananthapuram alone, WHI Migrant Suraksha Project of KSACS, reported 52 cases of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including scabies and herpes in a year. (The suraksha projects in the states have identified large number of DML with risky sexual behaviour as majority of them live away from families in their youthful ages. The Kerala State AIDS Control Society has established 8 projects for prevention of HIV/AIDS and treatment of STIs among migrant labourers. With the aim to minimize HIV transmission and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS among out migrant families at their source points, Hindustan Latex Family Planning Promotion Trust (HLFPPT) is implementing National Aids Control Program's Source Migrant Intervention Project in 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh (HLFPPT).

### **Interaction with the Local Community**

Even though, DML play significant role in the labour scenario in Kerala, resentment mounts against them as the prime culprit in major and minor instances of crime. They are very well integrated into the Kerala economy, but not into the host culture or society. The 2013 GIFT report says that,

they are often deliberately kept at bay, in order to ensure not only their social insularity but also to disempower them from asserting their rights - as citizens and labourers. This systematic exclusion works to the advantage of the host society in various ways: to keep the wage levels low, rent levels high, services cheap, and to maintain a labour force that is at their beck and call, one that can be absorbed and driven out at will.<sup>14</sup>

However, reports of increase in the number of crimes is a big concern for the resident population and the administrators. Murders apart,

<sup>14</sup> <http://gift.res.in/researchprojects/>

innumerable cases of theft, burglary, drug peddling, drug abuse, kidnaps, fights and sexual crimes involving migrant workers have been reported, especially from the countryside where the workers are in close contact with local residents.<sup>15</sup>

## **Social Work Strategies**

Inclusion is found to be major strategy to address the issues cited in this paper. The inclusion would help in addressing the issues faced by the DML and those faced by the local community too. Faetanini and Tankha in their document published from UNESCO, "Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India," suggested ten key areas for a better inclusion of migrants.<sup>16</sup> (DML are referred as internal migrants in the document)

### **1. Registration and Identity**

There is an urgent need to ensure that internal migrants are issued with a universally recognized and portable proof of identity that can form the basis on which to claim other socio-economic entitlements anywhere in the country.

### **2. Political civic inclusion**

Special provisions are needed to ensure the voting rights of internal migrants irrespective of their multi-locational residence.

### **3. Labour Market inclusion**

It is necessary to create job fairs and employment exchanges for internal migrants to be able to negotiate opportunities with employers, including training, placement and skill upgradation, with the mediation of NGOs and civil society organizations. Planned and skilled migration

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<sup>15</sup> K.P.M. Basheer, "Spurt in Crimes Involving Migrant Workers Rattles Kerala," *The Hindu Business Line*, May 2015, Retrieved from <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/spurt-in-crimes-involving-migrant-workers-rattles-kerala/article7252167.ece>

<sup>16</sup> M. Faetanini and R. Tankha, *Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India: Internal Migration in India Initiative*, New Delhi: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2013.



with handholding support from the state government and/or private companies and assured placement constitutes a new paradigm of migration that demonstrates the potential benefits of assisted migration. But, in situations where the migrants are uneducated and poor, creating awareness about their rights and knowing to whom to turn for information and support in negotiations are critical.

#### ***4. Legal Aid and Dispute Resolution***

Internal migrants, both men and women, should be able to access legal aid and counselling to protect them from work and wage-related malpractice, and to ensure they have access to grievance handling and dispute resolution mechanisms to negotiate with their employers and/or contractors.

#### ***5. Inclusion of Women Internal Migrants***

There is an urgent need to fill knowledge and research gaps to incorporate gender sensitive realities and to capture multiple reasons for women's migration. Gender sensitive approaches need to be mainstreamed into migrant support initiatives, including collection of sex-disaggregated data and adoption of gender budgeting, besides increasing awareness of the rights and entitlements of women migrants, and promoting and facilitating safe migration.

#### ***6. Inclusion through Access to Food***

The Public Distribution System (PDS) should be made portable to include multi locational migrant populations.

#### ***7. Inclusion through Housing***

Experiments in providing shelter security for internal migrants need to follow a continuum, starting from affordable rental housing to affordable private housing, with an eventual policy shift towards provision of de facto residential rights and housing.

#### ***8. Educational Inclusion***

Education provisions should be sufficiently flexible to ensure that mobile populations are not left out. The innovative policy responses and practices piloted by NGO and the Government, under the Sarva

Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (Education for All Movement), should be up-scaled.

### **9. Public Health Inclusion**

It is necessary to avoid the stigmatization of migrants as 'carriers' of diseases and infections and to recognize them as populations vulnerable to several health risks. Targeted interventions and outreach components can be designed for the health of internal migrants, taking into account the special vulnerability of women and children.

### **10. Financial Inclusion**

Access to formal banking facilities for internal migrants can enable promotion of savings and safe and secure transfer of remittances.

### **Responsive Provision**

The essence of social welfare is "government-protected minimum standards of income, nutrition, health, housing and education of every citizen, assured to him as a political right, not as charity".<sup>17</sup> All these together are called responsive provision. This responsive provision is the human imperative of enlightened society to respond to 'common human needs'.<sup>18</sup> Here the social worker is the service arranger who coordinate the services and service providers deliver the services to clients. They use the qualities of leadership, dignity, and wisdom to achieve desired outcome. Identifying the needs is the key to intervention. Skills are the particular behaviours necessary to perform the tasks required to meet the needs.<sup>19</sup> Rajagiri College of social sciences has conducted an action research to identify the current status and needs of the migrant population. Some of the key findings are given in three domains of working conditions, nutrition and health and social exclusion. This study was a cross sectional study conducted in the Ernakulam District of the State of Kerala among 10000 migrant population.

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<sup>17</sup> Harold L. Wilensky and Charls N. Lebeaux, *Industrial Society and Social Welfare* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), New York: the Free Press, 1965.

<sup>18</sup> Charlotte Towle, *Common Human Needs* (rev.ed), New York: NASW, 1957.

<sup>19</sup> Ruth R. Middleman and Gary B. Rhodes *Competent Supervision*. New Jercey, Prentice- Hall, Inc, 1985.

## Health Needs

<b>Communicable diseases</b>	
Malaria	80.7%
Diarrhea	74%
Tuberculosis	26%
Cholera	46%
Jaundice	46%
<b>Life style disease</b>	
Cancer	1%
High Blood Pressure	17.6%
Heart disease	12.6%
Respiratory diseases	70.9%
<b>Health Facilities</b>	
Out of pocket treatment expenses	48%
Felt discriminated in health services	84%
Living within 2 KM distance of any health care facility	37.3%
<b>Communicable diseases due to</b>	
Inadequate sanitation facilities – Availability of proper toilet facilities	56%
Poor waste disposal- Waste is thrown to free space by	15.3%
Water bodies	12%
Availability of clean drinking water	36.7%

## Health habits

Sleep Less than 6 Hours	56%
Irregular eating habits	32%

## Work Life

Percentage of people who work all the seven days in a week	30%
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## Working Hours per day

8-9 hour (considered as normal working pattern)	52%
12 Hours	45.3%
More than twelve Hours	2.7%



<b>Unhealthy Habits</b>	
Use of Hans and Pan Parag (Though banned)	3.8%
Cigarette	68.8%
Consumption of alcohol	58.2%

### **Work Conditions**

Work Life	
Percentage of people who work all the seven days in a week	30%

### **Working Hours per day**

8-9 hour ( considered as normal working pattern)	52%
12 Hours	45.3%
Twelve Hours	2.7%
No one gets paid leave to visit their family	
Loss of wages in case of injury / sickness -had loss (no casual leave or sick leave)	92.7%
Unskilled labourers	81 %

### **Economic condition**

Improved drastically for	42%
Improved moderately for	55.3%
Improved partially for	2.7%
Free accommodation is provided	59.3%
People satisfied with the accommodation	14.7%
Accommodation facilities have separate space for washing, bathing, lavatory, etc.	10%
Separate space for cooking	6%

### **Social Exclusion**

Interaction with local community (Others are not able to communicate due to lack of local language proficiency)	8%
The wage difference compared to native workers	
Less than Rs. 200	24%
Between 200 - 300	76%
More than Rs. 300	6.7%

<b>Hours of Work</b>	
8-9 hour (considered as normal working pattern)	52%
12 Hours	45.3%
More than twelve Hours	2.7%
<b>Economic condition</b>	
Improved drastically for	42%
Improved moderately for	55.3%
<b>Exploitations</b>	
Transportation- private buses charge higher amount form the migrant labourers	72%
Grocery and other shops (Pay Extra)	60%
Hotels Charge higher rate	24%

The morbidity is higher in migrant population compared to the general population. It is unethical not to respond to the plight of the migrant labourers and the Government is responsible for preventive and curative interventions. The enacted laws indicate the sensitivity of the government towards the migrant labourers. Socially committed institutions cannot escape from their responsibility to deal with the needs of the vulnerable population like migrants. But the staff members working with the migrant labourers connect two authorities such as the government and the institutions to provide care for the migrant labourers. Some of the governmental initiatives to protect the rights of the migrant population are as follows:

### **Employee Welfare Provisions**

<b>Provident Fund (PF)</b>	<b>43.3%</b>
State Insurance	43.3%
Gratuity Schemes	3.3%
Medical insurance schemes	47.3%

### Safety Measures

<b>Safety Belts</b>	<b>83.3%</b>
Jackets	18%
Gloves	51.3%
Shoes	49.3%
Helmet	83.3%
Mask	29.3%
<b>Government Social Security Documents</b>	
Aadhar card	74.1%
Ration Card (PDS)	19%
Pan Card	72.1%
Driving license	14.9%

### Schemes for Migrants in Kerala

Kerala is the first state in India to provide social security scheme for migrant workers. The registered migrants are entitled for accident/medical claim, children's education allowance, termination benefits after completing 5 years of work. Kerala government has set up Skill development institutions for migrant workers. One of the important health projects for the migrant population is the Migrant 'Suraksha' Project for Aids control and the important objective of it is to detect HIV positive cases and create health awareness. Government has also introduced Health cards and free medical camps for the migrant labours to ensure better access to health facilities.

### Micro Plan and Outreach Care Plan Implemented to Fulfil the Needs

The Outreach wing of Rajagiri College has done the broad Mapping, Resource Mapping, Seasonal Mapping and Site Mapping of the migrant labourers. This enables early identification, early interventions and better care for them.

The governmental and NGO intervention shows that there is a sense of obligation inclined in the society and it is many a time not coercive



compliance but compassionate compliance. Employer and government fulfilling the legal responsibility seems to be higher in Kerala. Ethics is not confined to religious and activists ethics. It is part of social activists, NGOs and the government functionaries are sensitive to the needs of the migrant labourers.

### **Ethical Dilemma in Social Work Practice**

Who takes the responsibility to ensure the protection of the rights of the migrants is the major ethical dilemma in Social Work practice with the migrant population. Individual professional versus Professional collective is a major question to be answered. There are major reasons for the ethical dilemma in social work profession, Lack of coaching, Licensing the practitioners, Career planning and Professional Development in the area of migrant population and most importantly there is no statutory positions in the government welfare departments to induct social workers with experience in working for the welfare of the migrants.

### **Dimensions of Dilemma**

#### **Context of Social Work with Migrants**

Laws are toothless until there are systems and processes to implement it. Indian Social security systems are only part of the Directive Principles and not the fundamental rights. So the legal protective mechanisms mentioned in the paper requires careful plan of action. Poorly implemented documentation system results in denial of social security measures like Public Distribution System, Health Insurance, Subsidies, etc. Lack of integration into host culture results in discrimination and violation of their rights.

#### **Purpose of Social Work among Migrants**

Social workers are caught up in the dilemma between: should the professional Social Work Intervention be Radical or curative or Developmental or Change oriented in terms of services to the migrant population? They are still confused about the basic purpose of social work intervention and think whether they work for Social Justice and Human Rights (as mentioned in definition of Social Work) or the Social

Workers become the agents of prevailing social, economic and political structures.

### **Structure and Content of Social Work Intervention**

The nature of Social Work intervention is another area of dilemma. Knowledge, skills and values of Social Work profession should equip them to work with the migrant labourers to work in various levels, Micro level practice; where they work in the grass root level with skills of direct practice; assessment, identification and individual level interventions for the migrants who are in need of specialized care and support. Secondly, in the meso level by managing the human services by developing systems and processes by which they ensure multi-dimensional, multi departmental and multi systemic approaches to integrate the services, and thirdly, the macro level where the social workers work with evidence based policy changes and influencing the governmental decisions in favour of the migrant population. Clearly Defined Ethical Positions of associations of professional social workers are the key to establish migrant friendly initiatives. The ethical responsibility is on the professional body of social workers and professional social work community.

### **Process of Ensuring Ethical Practice**

Unique contribution of Social Work in the area of migrant population is the coordination of services - both Geographical and Functional coordination for the scattered services being provided for the benefit of the migrant population. Social Workers do functional coordination by converging various services by liaising. The issues of migrant population cut across the officials of various departments like welfare, education, law, home department and police, excise, labour ministry, local self-governments, etc. So the single window system has to be in place to ensure maximum coverage of services. Geographical coordination requires the establishment of a coordinating council for all NGOs working for migrants as well as Health and Education. Professional Social Workers working with migration develop an excellent personal rapport with government officials in these departments and exercise a subtle emotional pressure to respond immediately and sensitively to the needs of individual migrant in a

humanitarian manner. It requires individual responsibility of the professional and collective responsibility of the profession.

Social Worker assumes various identities when they work in Public arena. Primarily they take up the Identity as a human being. It is by having basic humane attitude and making interventions as a member of the human society. Here the social worker uses the Community organization as a crucial method of intervention. Secondly, he takes up the Identity as a citizen by getting involved in political decision making, carrying out the civil rights, lobbying, etc. Thirdly, the social worker takes up the identity as a professional where s/he responds to the issue of migration professionally using their knowledge, skills and competencies to practice in all the three domains of social work practice: direct practice, management of service and policy practice. Social Worker does it by using all six methods of social work (Social Case Work, Social Group Work, Community Organization, Social Work Research, Social Welfare administration and social Action) and by developing the systems and processes for scientific practice.

## **Conclusion**

The model of social work response to the plight of the migrant workers should be based on networking and liaisoning with primary Health centres, NGOs, Kerala State Aids Control Society(KSACS) and other government organs. It should work on three major domains such as nutrition and health, working conditions and social exclusion. Migration and violation of their rights is a reality and it is high time to develop protocols and Standard operating Procedures for the better implementation of the legal and government provisions of the migrant population. Most important focus should be on institutionalizing the ethical practices. There should be efforts to specify the roles and responsibilities and spell out the required knowledge, competencies and value system to practice with the migrant population.

# Migration of Tribal Girls for Livelihood: Challenges and Prospects

**Prem Xalxo**

The continuous migration of tribal boys and girls from central and northern parts of India to the metropolitan cities for livelihood raises serious socio-cultural, religious and ethical issues. The prevalent misery, poverty and lack of job opportunities in the rural and semi-urban areas force them to jump into the abyss of uncertainties and challenges in the cities. Taking some concrete case studies as its basis, the present Paper tries to analyze the pull-push factors of migration of the tribal girls, its close connection with human trafficking, and their life situation in the cities. By responding to some of the pertinent fundamental ethical-theological questions, it tries to study their future prospects built on hope.

Rev. Dr. Prem Xalxo, SJ, is lecturer in moral theology at the Gregorian University in Rome. He had his Licentiate in moral theology from Alphonsianum, Rome and Doctorate in moral theology from the Gregorian University. His doctoral thesis, *Complementarity of Human Life and Other Life Forms in Nature*, was published in 2007 from Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome. A revised version of it, *Current Ecological Crisis and Its Moral Dimension*, was published in 2008 by Xavier Publications, Ranchi. Email: premxsj@gmail.com

From time immemorial, people have been migrating from one place to another in search of sustenance, security and shelter. The migration for livelihood implies leaving behind one's own people, place and property, and moving to a new place amidst uncertainties and challenges with a hope of finding better life conditions. In the context of India, there has been a huge influx of people from rural areas to the cities over the recent years, because of the growing lack of job opportunities coupled with the lack of basic life amenities, continuous crop failures,



decreasing revenues from the agricultural produces, and the government apathy towards the fundamental needs of rural and semi-rural people. Apart from the structural bureaucratic indifference, the rural population seems to bear the acute brunt of the climate change in the form of the unforeseeable fluctuation of weather conditions. Sometimes there is too much of rain and the other times, there is no rain at all in times of need. They suffer over and again from draught, flood, drying of lakes, water basins and rivers. They have been victims of deforestation, which snatches away their vital source of livelihood. Their agony to search for potable water intensifies with an alarming decrease in the phreatic level. In summary, “ecological degradation, landlessness and land alienation, unemployment and poverty”<sup>1</sup> can be ascribed as one of the primary reasons for the migration of the rural population to the cities.

One of the glaring and intriguing factors of migration in India is the formidable presence of the tribal girls from Chotanagpur plateau in the metropolitan cities. Paradoxically, Chotanagpur plateau is known for its rich mineral and natural resources, cultivable landscapes, streams and rivers, and life-sustaining forests for the local population. After the independence of India in 1947, especially after the creation of Jharkhand State in 2000, people from different parts of India came to Jharkhand in search of work and livelihood, and settled down in urban and semi-urban localities. Gradually they occupied the government institutions, factories and mines by pushing out the local people from their land and job opportunities. The State educational system, which was neither job-oriented nor skill-based for the self-employment, offered a bleak future for the tribal students. As a result, a significant number of school drop-out girls and boys, and even those completing their matriculation or higher secondary education, left their families and villages to go to the cities for a better future. Some of them were lured or trafficked to the cities, but both life and livelihood were not easy for them “in a strange land” (Ps 137:4). Some of them faced untold miseries, uncertainties and stiff challenges to survive and sustain amidst mental, physical and sexual exploitations apart from the cultural shock. The current paper aims to describe the challenges and prospects of the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Marianus Kujur – Vikas Jha, *Tribal Women Domestic Workers in Delhi*, (New Delhi: ISI Publications, 2008), p. 25.

tribal people, especially the domestic working girls, who were forced to migrate to the cities for livelihood because of adverse and unbearable situations back home.

While describing the plight of the Israelites, Prophet Isaiah writes, “This is a people despoiled and plundered, all of them trapped in holes, hidden away in prisons. They are taken as booty, with no one to rescue them, as spoil, with no one to demand their return” (Is 42:22). To a certain extent, the words of Prophet Isaiah reflect the plight of most of the tribal domestic working girls in various metropolitan cities of India. Being with them and working for them during my formation as a Jesuit Scholastic, compelled me to study their present situation and their future prospects. In 1998, I used to go on Sundays to Greater Kailash, a posh locality of New Delhi as a theology student of Vidya Jyoti, a Jesuit theology centre, for the social apostolate amidst the tribal domestic working girls. I had heard and read about them, but that was my first personal encounter with them. Most of them were from my homeland and belonged to different tribal communities scattered around north India. They had migrated to New Delhi to earn a living by working mostly in non-tribal families as *Aayas* or maidservants. Despite their precarious working conditions and constant physical, verbal, mental, sexual, emotional and psychological harassment, violence and exploitation, they seemed to be happy and lively on Sundays. That was the only day when they had the chance to meet and share their *sukham-dukham* (experiences of joys and sorrows), as it is known popularly. The Church premise offered a perfect set-up for their gathering. I interacted with them to know and understand them more closely. In the same year, we organized a common festival for all the tribals living in and around New Delhi. The occasion was the *Karam* festival, a feast celebrated at the conclusion of the paddy transplantation by almost all tribal communities of north India. Seeing the huge crowd, I realized for the first time the magnitude of migration of the tribal girls to different metropolitan cities of India. As the Master of the Ceremony to conduct the cultural activities, I could visualize the euphoria in their faces and in their way of singing and dancing; but I wondered how long such joy and excitement would last!

After 15 years, I participated in one of the weekly meetings of a group of tribal domestic working girls held in the premise of Indian

Social Institute, New Delhi on 29 December 2013. Under the umbrella of *Adivasi Jeevan Vikas Sanstha* (Tribal Life Development Society), run by JESA (Jesuits in Social Action), around two hundred girls gather every week in the Institute for the Holy Mass. They share their life and living conditions, and receive legal and other logistic assistance. To keep in touch with their tribal roots, some cultural activities are also organized occasionally for and by them. I interviewed thirteen girls from different social and religious background. Their stories and experiences represented the general feeling among those attending the regular Sunday meetings. Instilling in them the sense of human dignity, helping them to see themselves as the “images of God” (Gen 1:27), inculcating their tribal roots and identity, and strengthening their innate communitarian spirit remain the major challenges in the metropolitan cities. Over the years, many initiatives have been taken to improve their situation. An anthropological, theological and ethical study of their joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 1) amidst untold miseries might be a stepping stone to tap the further possibilities of their integral wellbeing.

### 1. Profiles of the Tribal Domestic Workers

The majority of the domestic working girls hail from the tribal areas of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal and the other seven north eastern States of India. They belong to five major tribes of India - Oraon, Munda, Kharia, Ho and Santhal, and are “known as *adivasis*, a Hindi term, which literally means original inhabitants. It is one of the common names given to agrarian or primitive peoples of India.”<sup>2</sup> Their population is concentrated in Chotanagpur Plateau. Right from the independence of India in 1947, all the successive Federal and State Governments have been interested only in exploiting the natural resources and pumping them away from the State neglecting completely the development of the local populace. Development-induced displacements have constantly forced the tribals away from their ancestral land without any proper compensation or resettlement. The Government and the multinationals set experience

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<sup>2</sup> Prem Xalxo, *Current Ecological Crisis and Its Moral Dimensions: A Tribal Perspective*, (Ranchi: Xavier Publications, 2008), p. 14.

and skill as the terms and conditions for employment in factories or mine establishments, which most of the tribals do not have. Even if a good number of tribal girls and boys have the qualifications, the all-around corruption, malfeasance and nepotism play a major role in bringing even the unskilled laborers from outside leaving aside the local people "excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 53) to fend for themselves.

The local tribal people depend primarily on the produce of the field and the forest for their subsistence. In the lack of proper irrigation facilities, their agriculture depends on the monsoon. Over the recent years, the erratic monsoon, gradual deterioration and degradation of cultivable land, shrinking water resources and insufficient agricultural produce have caused havoc in their life. Along with the produce of the field, they also depend on the forests for their livelihood. In name of saving the forests, the Forest Officials have outlined various restrictions to prevent them from using the forest produce. With the two major sources of livelihood gradually being dried up, they are forced to migrate to other States as unskilled laborers to work in agricultural fields, factories or construction sites. In the field of education, the Christian Missionaries have done an extraordinary work in the entire tribal area. However, most of the tribal girls discontinue their studies after a certain stage because of the lack of resources. Rampant poverty and lack of job opportunities in the rural areas force them to migrate to the cities either willingly or unwillingly.

John Lakra, a tribal Jesuit who has done extensive research on the tribal socio-cultural and religious traditions and customs, maintains that the tribals are "basically simple, sincere and honest people, hardworking and having a wonderful sense of cooperation and community."<sup>3</sup> True to the observation, the tribal girls, by nature, are simple, honest, sociable, soft-spoken, enduring, extremely hard-working, and possess an inherent capacity to adjust to any situation or place. A large number of them, despite working in the field, running after the household animals and doing the daily chores, study hard and complete their graduate and

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<sup>3</sup> John Lakra, "Rewriting Tribal Anthropology," *Sevartham* 22 (1997): 14.



post-graduate studies. However, one can imagine the life of a lone migrant young girl in a strange non-tribal family in a totally unknown place. For her, the mere fact of being uprooted from a closely-knit tribal community and being placed alone “in a strange land” (Ps 137:4), forces her to face a massive challenge to search for an identity and human dignity amidst innumerable untold miseries in the form of physical, sexual and psychological exploitations. Her struggle to sustain socio-cultural, moral and religious values offers an immense possibility of some deep anthropological, theological and ethical reflections on the situations of the worldwide domestic workers. Can their miseries be brought to light or can their cries of despair be heard (cf. Ex 3:7)?

## 2. Pull-Push Factors and Human Trafficking

The age-old formula of demand and supply in the market economy can explain the pull-push factors of migration. Despite India being projected as one of the growing economic giants, an extremely uneven development is all evident in semi-urban and rural areas. Rich have become richer; some have climbed the ladder of development to reach a totally new economic status; but a vast majority of the Indian population has remained untouched by the economic growth. The process of industrialization, urbanization and modernization has opened up new possibilities and opportunities for employments, creating a new group of rich middle class. The growth of “the urban middle class, especially the increase in the number of women working outside their homes and the availability of cheap domestic labor,”<sup>4</sup> function as a major pulling factor to attract the less privileged tribal communities for such labour.

The rural set-up offers almost negligible possibilities of any creative work or job opportunities to the tribal girls. Some of them observe the pathetic situation of their family members and peers who journey everyday to the nearby cities in search of a daily wage job. The construction companies or some rich families come to hire them for a day and pay according to their work. The daily morning scenario represents the parable told by Jesus, “For the kingdom of heaven is

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<sup>4</sup> K. John, “Domestic Women Workers in Urban Informal Sector,” *ABHINAV* 2/2 (2014): 6.

like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard” (Mt 20:1-2). Not all are hired for work, some remain there till the end of the day and return home empty handed. Living amidst such desperate situation, if someone offers the possibility of a better life in the cities, the tribal girls do not hesitate to jump into the abyss of uncertainties and challenges. The prospect of earning money on their own and being able to help their families pulls them to the cities, and the misery, poverty, helplessness and hopelessness work as the pushing factors.

Amidst the Pull-Push factors of migration, human trafficking raises some serious ethical questions. For several decades, human trafficking has been a burning issue confronting the northern States of India. Almost every day, the newspapers are filled with stories of tribal girls missing from a particular village. Realizing the seriousness of the problem, the Central Government drafted Domestic Workers (Registration, Social Security and Welfare) Act 2008, which states, “with no rights and rules to fall back on, most of the domestic helps have become contemporary slaves. It is also a known fact that many women and children are trafficked and exploited by the placement agencies, which operate openly without any form of restrictions and regulations.” However, there has not been any further progress in ratifying the Act or in taking some concrete steps to stop the human trafficking.

There are multiple groups at work behind the human trafficking. The first group is the mafia-type Placement Agencies, which charge a hefty sum of money as registration fee from those looking for a residential domestic worker. Their agents guarantee a regular supply by recruiting young girls from the impoverished semi-urban and rural areas. The agents receive thousand of rupees as commission and pay substantial kickbacks to the Police to ensure the continuity of human trafficking. They roam around discretely in the remote villages and take time patiently to identify the possible victims, befriend them through their peers and relatives. Once they gain their confidence, they lay trap cleverly and deceitfully convince them of good jobs and better life in the cities. If a group of girls is ready and willing, a meticulous plan is drafted to traffic them out of village via bus and railroad.

The second group of human traffickers comprises of the relatives and friends of the victims. Their method is the same as the first group. The major difference is that the persons in this case are known to the victims and their families and so, laying the trap becomes easy and the result is fast. While living with the possible victims, they almost brainwash them by selling the dream of a better life in the cities. On the pretext of taking the victims to the house of another relative or friend or to a public function, they traffic them to the cities.

The third group of human traffickers are the domestic working girls who return to the native villages for their holidays. Quite often, they already make a commitment before leaving their workplace to bring one or two girls along with them at the conclusion of their holidays. Some girls choose willingly to go to the cities and are even encouraged by the parents to go because the options are limited at home.

Once trafficked into the cities, the girls are handed over either to the Placement Agencies for a hefty commission or directly employed in some families. Some are even sold to the brothels. The newly trafficked girls are kept with other girls in a small room just enough to cook and sleep with little space for privacy until they are employed by someone. Once employed, their daily routine includes "cleaning (sweeping, swabbing and dusting), washing (clothes and dishes), or even putting machine-washed clothes on the clothesline or/and folding them, cooking or preparation for cooking such as chopping vegetables and making dough, or cooking a part of meal, ironing, housekeeping and extensions of these outside the home such as shopping."<sup>5</sup> Despite all these works, their living and working conditions are pathetic with no limits on working hours, no respect for their work, no protection or social security from physical, mental and sexual exploitations. Their employer forces them to bring a substitute when they are sick or want a leave in case of emergency. Without any formal contract, they live under constant fear that "their services can be terminated at any point of time."<sup>6</sup> The fear of being replaced by their substitutes keeps them

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<sup>5</sup> Surabhi T. Mahotra, *Domestic Workers: Conditions, Rights and Responsibilities*, (New Delhi: JAGORI, 2010), pp. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> Megha Shree, "Female Tribal Migrants as Domestic Workers: A Study of Their Compulsion and Working Conditions," *Man and Development* 34/1 (March 2012): 58.

from reporting their sickness to their employer. Sometimes they are thrown out of the house on the pretext of theft or no work. In most cases, FIR (First Information Report) is never registered. Their lack of knowledge of the legal procedure, the fear of losing their current job and also the prevailing “little confidence in complaint mechanisms or stigma due to breach in confidentiality”<sup>7</sup> can also be responsible for the silence or for not making any formal complaint to the police or to the legal authorities. Unfortunately, there is neither a proper community nor any structural support system to pursue such cases, which in turn, encourages human trafficking.

### 3. Case Studies

Time and again some cases of young domestic working girls being maltreated surface in the newspapers. On 7 February 2017, Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) along with a Sub Divisional Magistrate and Labour Department rescued two domestic working girls, who were being sexually abused by their owners in Vikaspuri, New Delhi. They were employed in October 2016, and were abused on regular basis without being paid their due till date. Two FIRs (First Information Reports) were registered at Vikaspuri Police Station, but as usual, the owner of the Placement Agency was still at large.<sup>8</sup> In another case of brutality against the domestic working girls, the Delhi Police arrested a doctor couple who had locked up their 13 year old domestic working girl in their apartment and gone for holidays in Thailand.<sup>9</sup> After her rescue by the Police, even if she recovers physically, the emotional and psychological injuries will continue to traumatize her. In yet another gory incident, a 24-year-old domestic working girl died in hospital in New Delhi on 6 January 2017, two weeks after she was admitted with multiple fractures and injuries. She had been trafficked from West

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<sup>7</sup> Surabhi T. Mahrotra, *Domestic Workers: Conditions, Rights and Responsibilities*, (New Delhi: JAGORI, 2010), p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> Group MP, “DCW, Cops Rescue 2 Domestic Workers being Sexually Abused by their Owners” in <http://www.millenniumpost.in/delhi/news-183241> (30/10/2017).

<sup>9</sup> cf. Gethin Chamberlain, “The Delhi Child Servant Scandal that has Outraged India” in <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/07/india-child-labour-delhi-outrage> (20/10/2017).



Bengal three years ago.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, such incidences create momentous public uproar or raise merely a flicker of curiosity, but rarely become an issue to be pursued. For a change, some NGOs and Women's Right Groups are demanding a renewed crackdown on unregulated employment agencies that profit from the domestic working girls from impoverished states lured to cities with the hope of earning a livelihood and supporting their families back home.

My interviews with the thirteen young domestic working girls on 29 December 2013 in Indian Social Institute, New Delhi made some startling revelations. Although some girls seem to enjoy good treatment, respect and freedom in their work place, they are reminded time and again by different people and circumstances that ultimately they are the *Ayas* or the "maid servants." Not having any other option, they face all challenges and instances of abuses and humiliations with tremendous courage, patience and perseverance. Not all the case studies present a gloomy state of the tribal domestic girls. My younger brother had four maidservants from Jharkhand over a period of 15 years. The first one remained for two years and the second one went back to her village only to get married. The other two remained for one year each. My brother and sister-in-law desperately needed someone to take care of their two children and the house, while they were away at work for the whole day. My sister-in-law did scold and abuse them sometimes for not carrying out their responsibilities according to her wish, nonetheless they were taken good care of their integral wellbeing. They participated in almost all family activities, such as meals, prayers and social festivities. There are many such cases where the domestic working girls are adapted like one of the family members in an atmosphere of respect, confidence and mutual trust.

#### 4. Some Fundamental Ethical-Theological Questions

Most of the tribal girls, whom I interviewed and interacted with during my formation period, seemed to be happy and content with their

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<sup>10</sup> Anuradha Nagaraj, "Abused Housemaid's Death in New Delhi Raises Trafficking Concerns" in <http://in.reuters.com/article/india-women-trafficking/abused-housemaids-death-in-new-delhi-raises-trafficking-concerns-idINKBN14Q1VG> (30/10/2017).

work and their working conditions; but their feeling of being alone, abandoned and away from home often tortured and traumatized them. Even if they received good treatment by their employers, the “maidservant” mentality invariably sprung forth time and again to segregate them from the rest of the family. During my recent interaction with them, it surfaced again that the biggest pain for them was not being treated as equal human beings. Unfortunately, the derogatory terms used and the negative attitudes shown towards them by their own tribal community members, working either in private or public sectors with a secure family and social life, seemed to be even more painful and agonizing. They seem to despise the domestic working girls from their own tribal communities. Their life experiences raise some serious ethical and theological questions regarding the concept of a human being, respect, dignity and role of faith in instilling those values in their life.

#### ***4.1 Migration: The Only Answer?***

Event though, migration is an age-old phenomenon and people have moved from one place to another to escape poverty, misery, threat and danger with the hope of peace, prosperity and security, the question arises whether the migration is the only answer to escape miseries and poverty? There are some fascinating examples of migrating both in the ancient as well as in recent times. In the Old Testament, God commands Abraham to migrate to a new land, “Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you” (Gen 12:1). And, Abraham obeyed God’s command. Joseph, Mary and Jesus migrate to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod (Mt 2:13-15). Most of the domestic working girls in New Delhi belong to the Oraon tribe, whose forefathers migrated to Chotanagpur Plateau around the fifth century B.C. from the west coast of India.<sup>11</sup> Today, the socio-cultural and economic situation of both the domestic working girls and their home States raise some serious questions regarding their migration to metropolitan cities. Can the plight of the tribal girls and the outsourcing of their talents, creativity and tremendous energy be justified in the

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<sup>11</sup> cf. Philip Ekka, *Tribal Movements: A Study in Social Change*, (Pathalgaon: Tribal Research and Documentation Centre, 2003), pp. 24-25.

name of survival and subsistence? Can their workforce not be used to transform their own homeland? These questions have been tormenting the tribal communities for a long time and they seem to be perplexed in searching for an adequate answer. The efforts to stop the outflow of the girls by the local people and the civic bodies have not yielded satisfactory results. The Government of Jharkhand, for example, has offered compulsory free education to the girls, mid-day meals to the students, job opportunities in rural areas through the constructions of roads, bridges, wells and ponds; but the rampant corruption, malfeasance and nepotism eat up more than half of the resources meant for the projects, and thus, perpetuate the poverty and misery of the local population, and force them to migrate to the metropolitan cities.

#### ***4.2 Maintaining Traditional Values and Tribal Identity in a Foreign Land***

Simplicity, honesty, hard work, the spirit of sharing and communion, interdependence and community life are some of the fundamental tribal values. Along with language, socio-cultural traditions, customs and practices, the tribal identity is encapsulated in five J's of their worldview – *Jan-Janwar-Jal-Jameen-Jungle* (humans, animals, water, land and forest).<sup>12</sup> Being born and brought up in closely-knit community, the tribal domestic workers encounter the first culture shock when they are employed in a non-tribal family – alone and isolated from the others. They face stiff challenges to maintain their traditional values and their identity. Often they succeed in adapting themselves to the new situation and integrate their traditional values with a new category of values of the non-tribal society. Sunday meetings and other social activities help them to strengthen their tribal roots and avoid socio-cultural annihilation. Unfortunately, most of them do not get such opportunities and are lost in the abyss of new socio-cultural values, often contrary to their own traditional socio-cultural and religious values.

#### ***4.3 Respect, Human Dignity and Justice***

The Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

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<sup>12</sup> Prem Xalxo, *Current Ecological Crisis and Its Moral Dimensions*, p. 12.

According to Irenaeus of Lyon, “the glory of God is a human being fully alive, and the life of the humanity is the vision of God.”<sup>13</sup> These words immediately capture the imagination of the victims of injustice, ill-treatment, abuse, disrespect and exploitation. The general ill-treatment meted out to the tribal domestic workers is rooted basically in the “slave or servant owning” Indian psyche. Their own tribal people, who are well-educated, trained and skilled and are working in private or public sectors, show little or no respect for them and for their work. Even in their native villages, there are many prejudices against them. The villagers suspect them of being infected by sexually transmitted diseases or even HIV positive, and hence, marriage remains a distant dream for them. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that “a majority of workers with a history of domestic work did not perceive it as disgraceful or undignified. Women who had no other support systems also did not view it as a humiliating or shameful.”<sup>14</sup> Most of them do not bother about other’s perception. The Christian teachings on justice and human dignity, stemming from the teachings of Jesus (Cf. Mt 5:3-6; Lk 4:18-19; 6:20-23), bring them tremendous strength and consolation. Jesus, the friend of poor, oppressed and marginalized, remains the perennial inspiration and guiding force to remind them that they been given “a sublime dignity based on the intimate bond that unites each individual to God.”<sup>15</sup> The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World states clearly that human persons are the apex of everything created. They can never be considered a mere instrument to be used for the other’s benefit (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 26).

The role of the Church has been distinctive and extremely commendable in seeking justice for the tribal domestic workers, irrespective of their religion, by offering them legal assistance, instilling in them self-esteem, respect and dignity by organizing socio-cultural

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<sup>13</sup> Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Hereies* 4.20.7; translation taken from R. Kendall Soulen – Linda Woodhead, ed., *God and Human Dignity*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Surabhi T. Mahotra, *Domestic Workers: Conditions, Rights and Responsibilities*, (New Delhi: JAGORI, 2010), p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> Kevin E. McKenna, *A Concise Guide to Catholic Social Teaching*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2013), p. 18.



and religious activities. According to the UCAN news, a common marriage ceremony of 14 tribal couples was organized on 17 May 2014 in Mumbai by a Church-run social forum Chotanagpur Migrant Tribal Development Network. The ceremony was held at Jesuit-run St. Stanislaus School ground and was officiated by the Auxiliary Bishop Agnelo Gracias of Mumbai. Such initiatives help the tribal migrants “to see beyond their humdrum and wretched life,”<sup>16</sup> and fill them with confidence and self-esteem. They do not exaggerate while emphasizing that the Church is their only hope, because others would not forego the luxury of “owning maid servants” which saves them from making beds, cooking, washing dishes, doing laundry and worrying about child care in the middle of the night. The sincere and serious efforts of the Church-run agencies are yielding desirable results in instilling in them dignity and self esteem by making them realize that they possess fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance (cf. *Caritas in veritate*, n. 62).

#### **4.4 Hope for a Better Future Grounded on Faith**

The tribal domestic workers flock in huge numbers to participate in Sunday Holy Masses primarily for three reason; first, they get the opportunity to meet their friends and relatives; second, they participate in some community activities organized by the Church-run social forum; and third, to live their faith in Jesus Christ, which infuses in them undying hope, courage and strength to combat the feeling of being abandoned, loneliness, separation from family, forced restriction and exploitations.<sup>17</sup> Their faith fills them hope, “a trustworthy hope,” by virtue of which they face the present: “the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal” (*Spe salvi*, n. 1). Their goal is deeper union with Jesus Christ in faith who promises them to liberate from the present untold miseries, “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). Their faith also gives them a sense of freedom and equality and guarantees them a fully human life in Jesus, “freed from servitude imposed on him [or her] by

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<sup>16</sup> "Tribals' Community Marriage Blessed in Mumbai" in *UCAN India Online News*, <http://www.ucanindia.in/news/tribals-community-marriage-blessed-in-mumbai/24949/daily> (18/10/2017).

<sup>17</sup> cf. Megha Shree, “Female Tribal Migrants as Domestic Workers,” p. 47.

others.”<sup>18</sup> They have profound faith in the initiatives taken by the Church-run agencies and in their efforts to offer legal and logistic assistance, because their initiatives are inspired and animated by Jesus Christ who promises that God is already present among the poor and the needy (Mt 25:1 ff), and discovers the kingdom of God among them.<sup>19</sup>

Their hope for a better future represents the hope of the victims of injustice, oppression, inhuman treatment, violence and exploitations. At the end of the dark tunnel of hopelessness and despair, the only ray of hope is seen in Jesus Christ. In the Old and New Testament, the structure of hope is “characterized by God’s promise, fulfillment, and then promise of a sure and radical change of [human] existence into something which can only be understood as the formation of a new heaven and a new earth.”<sup>20</sup> This hope requires commitment because it is a promise about things yet unseen.<sup>21</sup> Such commitment and perseverance transform their hope into an eschatological hope, when “the incompleteness of their present experience of God will be resolved, their present thirst for God fulfilled, their present need for release and salvation realized.”<sup>22</sup> It is the hope of the last days when God will “wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev 21:4), because each day is the end day for them. For them, such hope is the source of strength to fight the present day despair, suffering and the harsh realities of life with courage and faith in Jesus Christ.

## 5. Future Prospects built on Hopes

The Preamble of the International Labor Organization on Domestic Workers held in Geneva on 1 June 2011, recognized “the significant contribution of domestic workers to the global economy, which includes increasing paid job opportunities for women and men workers with family responsibilities, greater scope for caring for ageing populations, children and persons with a disability, and substantial income transfers

<sup>18</sup> Pontifical Commission “Justitia et Pax”, *The Church and Human Rights*, (Vatican City: Pontifical Commission “Justitia et Pax”, 1975), p. 47.

<sup>19</sup> cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 102.

<sup>20</sup> Robert C. Doyle, *Eschatology and the Shape of Christian Belief*, (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Publishing, 1999), p. 298.

<sup>21</sup> cf. *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>22</sup> Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of the Patristic Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), p. 1.

within and between countries.” The Convention outlined clear guidelines on terms and conditions of employment, wages, working hours, effective protection against all forms of abuse, harassment and violence, social security and the avoidance of child labour. Unfortunately, “domestic work is not recognized as ‘work’ by the Indian Government. The state does not value or recognize this work as a contribution to society and the economy.”<sup>23</sup> If the ILO recommendations were implemented by the Government of India, the domestic workers would have enjoyed the rights and provisions like any other worker of the organized sector and acquired confidence, self-esteem and dignity for what they are and for what they do.

Paradoxically, without the domestic workers “work,” even though not recognized by the Government as “work,” the thriving middle class of Indian metropolitan cities would crumble. Therefore, the “globalization of indifference” (*E G*, n. 54) toward them must end and their rights and privileges must be ascertained and recognized legally. For the moment, improving their working conditions, guaranteeing respect and dignity for their work and their person, an adequate wage, access to health care, right to rest and to have regular contact with their parents and peers have to be urgently and adequately addressed. The Church has always shown deep interest and concern to the persons like them who try “to escape the ravages of hunger, poverty, endemic disease and ignorance” (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 1). Various charitable institutes and Non Governmental Organizations are working to improve their situation and to force the Government to ratify the recommendations of the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers. For example, the National Platform for Domestic Workers, which includes 20 organizations from 15 states, recently submitted a petition demanding comprehensive legislation. They proposed an autonomous statutory body or Tripartite Board, with compulsory registration of employer, employee and agency.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, there is hope for the future, but that hope can take a concrete form if and only if their work is recognized, their rights are guaranteed by some specific laws and they are given due respect for what they do and what they are as human beings.

<sup>23</sup>Surabhi T. Mahrotra, *Domestic Workers*, p. 50.

<sup>24</sup> Divya Trivedi, “The Invisible Workers” in <http://www.thehindu.com/features/the-yin-thing/the-invisible-workers/article5229435.ece> (14/10/2017).

# Biblical Perspectives on Migration

**Tomy Thomas Kattampally**

The globalization of migration causes numerous imbalances in the rhythm of the society. Migrants often experience disappointment, distress, loneliness and marginalization. They are in perennial danger of becoming victims of human trafficking. The concern of this article is to reemphasize the role of the Church to get involved in the noble cause of extending helping hands to the migrants who depend a lot on the mercy of others. A rereading of the biblical texts alluding to migration can enlighten and inspire the church today in its response to the migrants.

Tomy Thomas Kattampally, CMI is Assistant Professor at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, and is teaching biblical theology. He holds a Licentiate in Scriptural studies from the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, and a doctorate from Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune.

## Introduction

Every five seconds at least a person is displaced in the world. This means that on any given day, thousands of people are being forced to leave their homes. The term migration has become so popular that it does not need any more explanation. Many move by choice, others by necessity and others by force. Humankind's story is a story of migration. All are, or have been, migrants, immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers.<sup>1</sup> Many scholars who do studies on migration and its aftermath wish to bring to notice migration as one of the burning issues of this epoch by calling it *The Age of Migration*.<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis says,

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<sup>1</sup> Joan M. Maruskin, "The Bible: The Ultimate Migration Handbook," *Church and Society* July/August (2005): 78.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: Guilford Press, 2009).



“Migration today is not a phenomenon limited to some areas of the planet. It affects all continents and is growing into a tragic situation of global proportions.”<sup>3</sup> The statistics also proves that the migration is on increase day by day: “In 2013, the number of international migrants worldwide (the global migrant stock) reached 232 million, up from 154 million in 1990 and from 76 million in 1960.”<sup>4</sup>

The concern of this article is to reemphasize the role of the Church to get involved in the noble cause of extending the helping hands to the migrants who depend a lot on the mercy of others. There is no doubt that the Church should be motivated and rekindled always by the word of God, whenever it is confronted with the challenges of this world.

There are allusions to migration in the creation story, in the call of Abraham, in the exodus event, in the Exile, in the wisdom literature and prophetic literature. The salvation history which unfolded in the Old Testament narratives can shed light on the reality of migration which causes a lot of confusion among the faithful with regard to the right attitude they need to have towards the migrants. It is followed by an analysis of allusions to migration in the life of Jesus, in his ministry and his teachings. His teaching which includes the right attitude towards the stranger is discussed in detail to identify the attitude one needs to have towards migrants.

## **1. Lord God Sent him forth from the Garden...(Gen 3:22-24)**

The entire biblical narrative can be considered as a migration story. Joan Maruskin says, “The Bible begins with God’s spirit migrating over

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David Hollenbach, “A Future Beyond Borders. Reimagining the Nation-State and the Church,” in *Living With (out) Borders* (ed. Agnes M. Brazal and María Teresa Dávila. New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 223. Chales Irudayam, “Migration and Poverty: Issues and Responses of the Church,” *Asian Horizons* 8 (2014): 789.

<sup>3</sup> Francis, “Child Migrants, the Vulnerable and the Voiceless,” Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the World day of Migrants and Refugees, (15 January 2017). [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160908\\_world-migrants-day-2017.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20160908_world-migrants-day-2017.html)

<sup>4</sup> David Hollenbach, “A Future Beyond Borders. Reimagining the Nation-State and the Church,” 223.

the face of the water. Then God, after creating the birds, fish, and animals (all of whom migrate), moves throughout creation looking for a caretaker for this world.”<sup>5</sup> Of course he finds allusions of migration in many texts of the book of Genesis chapters 1-11. According to him God’s concern for the sojourners in the world begins at the point when Adam and Eve are sent out from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:22-24). The theme of caring for the stranger is continued when Cain is made wanderer as punishment for his sin (Gen 4:8-16). Noah and his family are forced to flee their land because of the flood, and they become migrants without a known destination (Gen 6-9).<sup>6</sup> The allusions to migration which are present in the primeval history can be understood as a divine call with a purpose which would be accompanied by the divine providence. Migration is essentially part and parcel of creation and its preservation.

## **2. Go from Your Country...(Gen 12:1-9)**

The very narrative of the call of Abraham shows that he was asked to leave his country and his kindred and his father’s house to go to the land the Lord would show him (Gen 12:1). Abraham had to migrate and be at the disposal of God’s will in order to become a blessing and to become the father of all who would believe in God. Abraham is said to have migrated to Egypt due to famine, and fears for his life because of his wife Sarah who was very beautiful. Sarah says to Pharaoh that she is Abraham’s sister and thus Sarah finds herself in Pharaoh’s harem. Yahweh intervenes and afflicts Pharaoh with plagues, and Pharaoh finally discovers that truth and gives back to him his wife. Pharaoh respects Abraham by sending an escort to take care of him and his wife (Gen 12:10-20). Almost the same experience is narrated in Genesis chapter 20:1-18. Abraham and Sarah migrated and settled in Gerar, the land of Abimelech, the king of Philistines. Abimelech takes Sarah as his wife and God appears to him in a dream and has a long discussion with him and Abimelech is healed of his illness through the intercession

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<sup>5</sup> Joan M. Maruskin, “The Bible: The Ultimate Migration Handbook,” 77. He sees migration as a move that is why he finds the movement of the Spirit of God as a migration.

<sup>6</sup> Joan M. Maruskin, “The Bible: The Ultimate Migration Handbook,” 77-78.

of Abraham. Abimelech treats Abraham very kindly and pleases him by giving him a sheep, oxen, male and female slaves, etc.

In the first narration it is specified that migration of Abraham was due to famine. It was a forced migration and he experiences the normal fear and uncertainties involved in any migration. God defends the cause of the migrant Abraham and his wife. However, he gets the providential care whenever he was put in great trouble. The sovereigns also show him great hospitality when they realized that he was a man of God. If the migration of today can be viewed as part of the divine providence and in many cases as forced migration the general attitude of the people towards them would change. At a later stage when the Israelites evolved as a people, in their consciousness they always kept the memory of their ancestor Abraham alive as a migrant, in their creed: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous" (Deut 26:5). Such a consciousness as migrant people helped them to be faithful to God and to be responsible citizens. As descendants of Abraham the faithful should always have in their consciousness the vulnerability a migrant can have in his life in order to be generous and kind to the needs of migrants today.

### **3. Remember that You were a Slave in the Land of Egypt...(Deut 5:15)**

Slave is a person held in bondage. Israelites had to recall their past as slaves in order to worship their God meaningfully. One should always connect with his past in order to have a right relationship with God and his neighbour. In almost all the places the Hebrew word *ebed* means both slave and worshiper.<sup>7</sup> The Israelites were delivered from the slavery of Egyptians in order to serve God for ever. Therefore by remembering the past Israelites were made genuine worshipers of God. That would consequently make them genuine people who would be concerned about the needs of the other. One should be obedient to God in order to have the capacity to reach out to those who are in need.

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<sup>7</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, "ebed" in *A Bilingual Dictionary of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament* (Boston:Brill, 1998), 671.

The exodus becomes the central event in the life of Israelites. George Edayadiyil says, "It is in this event that the Old Testament is anchored."<sup>8</sup> He says that Exodus is a clarion call of God: "It is here that God becomes the redeemer, and Moses the mediator. The redeeming face is a key portrayal of God in the Bible and Israel knew this God from Egypt. The God from Egypt is a God who saves. This belief is fundamentally linked with the Exodus experience."<sup>9</sup> The saving activity of God which is manifested in the Exodus event alludes to God who is the creator. It is the creator God who redeems Israel from Egypt. God's work in creation had been shown to be life-giving, life-preserving, and life-blessing (Gen 1:7, 12, 20). What God does in the redemption is in the service of these goals which are endangered in Egypt. Therefore Exodus event has a retrospective effect as well as a prospective effect in the biblical narrative. It becomes the foundational principle in the covenant between God and Israel. The commandment regarding the Sabbath draws the motivation from the experience of Exodus: "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut 5:15). The laws dealing with slaves are also based on the Exodus experience in the book of Deuteronomy: "Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of bounty with which the Lord your God has blessed you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today" (Deut 15:14-15).

It is through the Exodus experience that the identity of God is revealed to Israel as well as to the world. The identity of God is revealed as Yahweh: "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians" (Ex 6:7). The deliverance from Egypt turned to be impossible for Israelites under the kingship of Pharaoh, however, it is made possible through the intervention of Yahweh. The troublesome journey through the wilderness turned to be life threatening many times,

<sup>8</sup> George Edayadiyil, *Beyond Exodus* (Bangalore: ATC, 2011), 50.

<sup>9</sup> George Edayadiyil, *Beyond Exodus*, 50.



however, Yahweh provided them with food and drink, fought for them against the enemies by giving the victory and accompanied them all through the journey by an all pervading presence. Therefore, Yahweh became the unique and the only redeemer in their life. Israelites were basically a migrant people and it is that experience which shaped their history, theology and spirituality.

It was noted that migration involves care of the refugees. God provided manna and water and all they needed to survive. The instruction given to the people who occupied the land is really noteworthy: "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut 10:17-19). The book of Deuteronomy contains numerous statements of how God's people need to care for the alien in the land (Deut 14:29; 23:7; 24:17; 25:19; 26:12; 27:19). The mandate to care for the aliens foreshadows the New Testament mandate to care for the most needy.<sup>10</sup>

Joan Maruskin observes that the story of uprootedness continues throughout the Hebrew Bible, especially in the story of the Exile, which can be followed in Kings, Chronicles, Esther, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos.<sup>11</sup> The story of Ruth is taken in the scholarly circle as a model for reflecting on the issue of migration and the hospitality which Christian should develop towards the migrant people. Boaz's hospitality is presented as an ideal trait of a reformed Israelite, and the incorporation of others as the fullest expression of hospitality.<sup>12</sup> The books of wisdom like Psalms (Psalm 91; 137), and the book of Job (Job 31:32) speak about the need of taking care of the refugees. The Hebrew Bible closes with an admonition from God through the prophet Malachi (Mal 3:5) to have right attitude towards orphans and the alien.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Joan M. Maruskin, "The Bible: The Ultimate Migration Handbook," 82-84.

<sup>11</sup> Joan M. Maruskin, "The Bible: The Ultimate Migration Handbook," 85.

<sup>12</sup> Lúcas Chan, "The Hebrew Bible and The Discourse on Migration: A Reflection on the Virtue of Hospitality in the Book of Ruth," *Asian Horizons* 8 (2014): 665-679.

<sup>13</sup> Joan M. Maruskin, "The Bible: The Ultimate Migration Handbook," 86.

#### 4. Jesus the Migrant and the Itinerant Missionary

In the presentation of Jesus and the spread of the Gospel in the New Testament, there are many allusions to the migration that took place as a divine plan. Jesus in his early childhood was the son of migrants who fled to Egypt seeking refuge from persecution (Mt 2:13-20). Different from other evangelists Matthew describes the flight of Joseph, Mary and child Jesus to Egypt. Matthew seems to be interested in presenting the flight of Holy Family to Egypt and avoids the description of the Journey of the Holy Family to Jerusalem as against Luke.<sup>14</sup> It is evident in the narrative that the child is protected through the divine guidance. Therefore Matthew seems to be saying that nothing has happened by accident but it unfolds God's saving plan. Jesus himself has led an itinerant lifestyle which speaks about the life situation of migrants and the attitude of the host communities.<sup>15</sup> When it comes to the spread of the Gospel it seems to be very providential that the Jews were dispersed all through the world: "The spread of the gospel in the Greco-Roman world shows that the diaspora had been a preparatory step. The sovereign God uses the dispersed people as tools for the spread of the message of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth."<sup>16</sup> The teachings of Jesus always emphasized the need of caring for the stranger (Mt 25:35-41). We would like to focus our attention on this compelling command of Jesus to care for the stranger as a model to be followed in our approach to the migrants.

#### 5. I was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me (Mt 25:35)

The Greek word for stranger is *xenos*. It is used in the New Testament to describe the identity of a Christian as a stranger in this world.<sup>17</sup> The acts of kindness mentioned in Isaiah 58:7, is being

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Horton Gundry, *Matthew, a Commentary on his literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 32.

<sup>15</sup> Rafael Luciani, "The Itinerant Fraternity of Jesus. Christological Discernment of the Migration Drama," in *Living With (out) Borders* (ed. Agnes M. Brazal and María Teresa Dávila. New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 206-212.

<sup>16</sup> Somuel Escobar, "Migration," *Latin American Theology* 11 (2016): 109.

<sup>17</sup> J.H. Friedrich, "xenos" *EDNT*, II, 485. "Christians are strangers in this world since they belong to God (Eph 2:19)."

mentioned here with certain additions. Isaiah was insisting on practicing such acts of kindness in order to be a genuine worshiper. To the distribution of food to the hungry Matthew adds the giving of drink to the thirsty. Gundry notes that this addition produces parallelism and an allusion to the hospitality given by genuine Christians to a fellow disciple who is fleeing persecution (Mt 10:42). In Matthew's narration the unsheltered poor becomes an unsheltered stranger, again referring to a Christian refugee, whose nakedness comes over from Isaiah to indicate his poverty.<sup>18</sup> The first discourse of Jesus begins with the beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12) and the last discourse closes with the vision of the final judgment. All the other teachings are put in between them. In the final judgment, Jesus puts the gratuitous and the generous gift which one offers to the other and is beneficial to the other, as the main thrust of the discourse. Therefore, Jesus was emphasizing the need of having such attitudes in the life of his followers. It is noteworthy that hunger, thirst, nakedness, poverty are all connected with a refugee.<sup>19</sup> Migration results in leaving a large number of population deprived of their basic needs like food and shelter. "If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (Jas 2:15-17). It is to this bare reality of the migrants that each person should open his eyes and respond.

The attitude one needs to have towards the stranger is expressed by the use of the Greek word *sunago*. The special meaning 'receive as a guest' in Mt 25:35, 38, 43 emerges from the contrast "stranger/homeless" on the one hand, and 'receive into one's home' on the other.<sup>20</sup> In the letter to Hebrews there is an explicit reference to the hospitality that is to be shown to the stranger: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb 13:2). The reference to the hospitality that is shown

<sup>18</sup> Robert Horton Gundry, *Mathew, a Commentary on his literary and Theological Art*, 513.

<sup>19</sup> Chales Irudayam, "Migration and Poverty: Issues and Responses of the Church," 792-793.

<sup>20</sup> H. Frankemölle, "sunago" III, 292.

to the angels without knowing it must be an allusion to the hospitality that Abraham and Lot showed to the strangers.<sup>21</sup> These references prove that hospitality is an exemplary virtue one needs to practice in order to have the grace of serving God as well as the other.

Here Matthew is listing only six acts of mercy, where the list could be an elaborate one. Therefore, these acts of mercy are to be considered as the most important ones. The hospitality which is to be shown to the stranger is presented here as an act of mercy. The necessity of practicing acts of mercy by Christians was the main thrust of the celebration of the Year of Mercy. The mercy which is the embodiment of love was the most important message of Jesus. Benedict XVI says, "Mercy is in reality the core of the Gospel message; it is the name of God himself."<sup>22</sup> Migration is one of the important reasons through which this world is very badly wounded. In order to heal such wounds the world is in need of mercy. The importance of practicing mercy is revealed in the reward they would get on the Day of Judgment. Those who take care of the needy people will have the right to inherit the Kingdom of God (Mt 25:34). There is a close connection between the attitude of a person to the stranger and the inheritance of the Kingdom of God.

Many are not encouraged to practice the virtue of hospitality to the migrants as they are not very clear about the reward they would get. However, Mt 25:34 clearly mentions about the reward they would get for their act of mercy towards the stranger. The inheritance of the Kingdom is equivalent to eternal life.<sup>23</sup> It is made clear in Mt 25:46: "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." The promise made to Abraham and his descendants was realized when the Israelites occupied the land after long years of exodus.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Kalluveetil, "Sojourner and Foreigner: Biblical Perspectives," *Asian Horizons* 8 (2014): 682.

<sup>22</sup> Benedict XVI, "Regina Caeli" (30 March, 2008), [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2008/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_reg\\_20080330.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_reg_20080330.html)

<sup>23</sup> Robert Horton Gundry, *Mathew, a Commentary on his literary and Theological Art*, 513.



The God who was faithful in his promise to the Israelites will be faithful in fulfilling the promise given to all those who practice acts of mercy like hospitality to the strangers. The promise made to the new Israel is of course the inheritance of eternal life for their righteous acts. The life of a believer comes to its culmination when he inherits the eternal life as the final goal of his journey. If he can guarantee such an inheritance by showing hospitality to the stranger, this is indeed the suitable time to practice such a virtue when thousands of people are left without having access to the basic needs of life due to migration.

## **Conclusion**

The Church being the new Israel should never forget that their ancestors were basically migrant people and it was through that experience, they emerged as the chosen people of Yahweh, the God of the OT. God who intervened in the life of Israelites, the migrant people to alleviate their miseries and sorrows, calls each and every person who believes in His providence to seriously engage in the ministry of caring for the migrants who are in real need of preserving their dignity. The disciples of Jesus should take care of the migrants who are suffering due to lack of food, shelter, money, etc. There are number of barriers to reach out to these people who are deprived of their right to live a dignified life. Jesus must be the example for any disciple who is engaged in the acts of kindness aimed at helping the migrants as underprivileged people, constituting a major share of the international population. Those who take into consideration the cause of the migrants as the need of the time only can be considered as a genuine worshiper. One can inherit the eternal life which is prepared from the beginning of the world only when he caters to the needs of the stranger.

# **Pope Francis on Migration**

**Ansa George and Shaji George Kochuthara**

From the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has been an uncompromising defender of refugees and migrants. His concern for migrants and defence of them have been expressed through his addresses, messages and public statements, as well as through powerful gestures like visit to Lampedusa, and washing the feet of migrants on Maundy Thursday. For Pope Francis, hospitality to migrants and solidarity with them is an ethical imperative here and now. In his various messages he emphasises the virtues of hospitality, compassion, solidarity, justice to be extended to migrants.

Sr Ansa George SH belongs to the Sacred Heart Congregation. She completed her Licentiate in Moral Theology at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, and is at present undergoing her doctoral studies in moral theology at the same institution.

Dr. Shaji George Kochuthara, CMI is associate professor of moral theology at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram. He completed his doctoral studies in moral theology at the Gregorian University, Rome. He has been teaching at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram since 2006.

## **Introduction**

One of the most discussed and disturbing issues in the national and international levels today is the issue of migration, with social, political, economic and ethical implications. Migration has become a widespread phenomenon and involves practically all nations either as countries of departure or of arrival. Years from the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are often characterised as the 'the age of migration.'<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Irudayam, "Migration and Poverty: Issues and Responses of the Church," *Asian Horizons* 8, 4 (December 2014) 790.

prophetically called migration as the ‘sign of the times.’<sup>2</sup> Migration has been one of the most dynamic human activities from the very beginning of human life. However, the Refugee crisis in Europe following the Arab Spring unrest and political crisis in Syria and subsequently in other West Asian countries lead to heated debates over the rights of the migrants and the rights of the ‘citizens’ and the ethics of welcoming or rejecting the refugees. European governments and political leaders were sharply divided on the question of migration, bringing the question of migration to the centre stage of political, social and ethical discourse. In that context, we find Pope Francis as a staunch advocate and defender of the refugees, affirming their rights, and underscoring the need of compassion in welcoming them. Although Pope Francis has been strongly arguing for the rights of the migrants in general, attempts by the developed nations to deny asylum to the refugees made him intervene directly in the Refugee crisis. We find his defence of the migrants in general, and particularly of the refugees, in his addresses for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, and in many other public addresses and statements.

### **Pope Francis as the Defender of Migrants**

His own very personal experience of having lived as a migrant might have influenced Pope Francis. As a migrant, he might have felt the pain a migrant goes through.<sup>3</sup> We do not know how decisive was this personal experience. On the other hand, from the beginning of his papacy, Europe has been experiencing the Refugee crisis, to which he had to respond. Whatever be the case, from the beginning of his papacy, Francis has been a strong defendant of the migrants and their rights and our duty towards them.

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<sup>2</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, “Migration: A Sign of the Times,” Message for the 2006 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/migration/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20051018\\_world-migrants-day.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/migration/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20051018_world-migrants-day.html). The concept ‘sign of the times’ is described in detail in the article: Prem Xalxo, SJ, “Reading the Signs of the Times: A Moral Theological Appraisal,” in *Revisiting Vatican II: 50 Years of Renewal*, vol. III, ed. Shaji George Kochuthara, CMI, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2015, 172-189.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.makefamilytree.com/articles/pope\\_Francis\\_I\\_family\\_tree\\_and\\_biography.html](http://www.makefamilytree.com/articles/pope_Francis_I_family_tree_and_biography.html)

As hundreds of thousands of migrants arrived in Europe, following the political crisis in West Asia, governments and political leadership in Europe became divided over the steps to be taken. Although the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and a few other leaders stood for accepting the migrants, many others were strongly opposed to it. The civil society also was divided upon this issue. Many were concerned about terrorism (that is, there would be terrorists among the migrants), the possible threat to the employment opportunities for the locals of the host countries, the economic burden of feeding and taking care of the migrants, the responsibility of providing adequate facilities to the migrants, the risk of contagious diseases, the risk of migrants threatening the peaceful life of the host countries, the cultural differences and conflicts, and so on. In such a context, Pope Francis spoke in unambiguous terms for the migrants, defending their rights, emphasising the need of the virtue of hospitality towards them, and pointing out that solidarity with them was an ethical imperative of the time.

### Visit to Lampedusa

On 8 July 2013, in his historic visit to the small Sicilian island Lampedusa, where hundreds of thousands of migrants arrive in Europe by sea route, he expressed solidarity with them by spending time with them and celebrating a mass there. This was his first official trip outside the city of Rome, and that itself was considered highly symbolic. His visit and the homily during the mass were widely reported, and were highlighted by the media as a “dramatic pro-immigrant outing.”<sup>4</sup> He was not worried that in the given context it could be considered even as a political stance. Instead, he was unambiguous in his defence of the migrants, and our responsibility towards them. At Lampedusa, he placed a wreath of flowers in the sea to remember the thousands of migrants who had died making the journey to Italy from Africa. He then told that he went to Lampedusa, “today to pray, to make a gesture of closeness, but also to reawaken our consciences so that what happened would not be repeated.” The Pope celebrated the mass

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<sup>4</sup> See for example, “Pope Francis Sounds Pro-Immigrant Message in Lampedusa During First Official Trip outside Rome,” *Huffington Post*, 08-07-2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/pope-francis-immigration\\_n\\_3560803](http://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/pope-francis-immigration_n_3560803)



wearing violet vestments, calling it a “liturgy of repentance,” and said, “let us ask the Lord for the grace to weep over our indifference, to weep over the cruelty in the world, in ourselves, and even in those who anonymously make socio-economic decisions that open the way to tragedies like this.” In the homily, referring to the story of Abel and Cain, he told, “God asks each one of us: Where is the blood of your brother that cries out to me?... Today no one in the world feels responsible for this; we have lost the sense of fraternal responsibility.” He asks a few questions challenging our conscience:

Has any one of us grieved for the death of these brothers and sisters? Has any one of us wept for these persons who were on the boat? For the young mothers carrying their babies? For these men who were looking for a means of supporting their families? We are a society which has forgotten how to weep, how to experience compassion - ‘suffering with’ others: the globalization of indifference has taken from us the ability to weep!

He also criticized the present culture that makes us insensitive to the suffering of the migrants, calling it the globalization of indifference: “In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn’t affect me; it doesn’t concern me; it’s none of my business!” He concluded the homily asking the Lord’s forgiveness for the indifference to the suffering brothers and sisters.

In yet another powerful gesture, on the Maundy Thursday of 2016, the Pope washed the feet of Muslim, Orthodox and Hindu migrants. He also emphasised that, “We have different cultures and religions, but we are brothers and we want to live in peace.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Messages for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees**

The World Day of Migrants and Refugees was instituted by Pope Pius X in 1914, and the day was celebrated in January each year.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Pope Francis to wash feet of Muslim, Orthodox, Hindu Migrants,” *Chicago Tribune*, 24 March 2016, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-pope-francis-washing-migrants-feet-20160324-story.html>

<sup>6</sup> From 2001, the United Nations Organization started celebrating June 20<sup>th</sup> as the World Refugee Day.

Since then the Popes have been regularly giving messages for the day. Pope Francis has continued this tradition, emphatically asserting the rights of the migrants and our duty towards them.

In his message for the 2014 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, “Migrants and Refugees: Towards a Better World,” Pope Francis emphasised the values of solidarity, hospitality and fraternity, ensuring the human dignity of the migrants. He also called for a deeper understanding of the factors that cause migration, the structures of exploitation and the growing inequality between the rich and the poor as well as between the rich and poor nations.<sup>7</sup>

In his message for the 101<sup>st</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2015), “Church without Frontiers, Mother to All,” the Pope underscored the mission of the Church “to love Jesus Christ, to adore and love him, particularly in the poorest and most abandoned; among these are certainly migrants and refugees, who are trying to escape difficult living conditions and dangers of every kind.”<sup>8</sup>

In the message for the 2016 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, “Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy,” given during the Year of Mercy, the Pope describes the plight of the migrants and says, “Today, more than in the past, the Gospel of mercy troubles our consciences, prevents us from taking the suffering of others for granted, and points out way of responding which, grounded in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, find practical expression in works of spiritual and corporal mercy.”<sup>9</sup> He emphasizes

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<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, “Migrants and Refugees: Towards a Better World,” Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 101<sup>st</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2014), [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130805\\_world-migrants-day.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20130805_world-migrants-day.html)

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, “Church Without Frontiers, Mother of All,” Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 101<sup>st</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2015), [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140903\\_world-migrants-day-2015.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20140903_world-migrants-day-2015.html)

<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis, “Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy,” Message for the 2016 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150912\\_world-migrants-day-2016.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20150912_world-migrants-day-2016.html)

that “Biblical revelation urges us to welcome the stranger; it tells us that in so doing, we open our doors to God, and that in the faces of others we see the face of Christ himself.” He unambiguously holds that “it is important to view migrants not only on the basis of their status as regular or irregular, but above all as people whose dignity is to be protected and who are capable of contributing to progress and the general welfare.”<sup>10</sup>

In the message for 2017, “Child Migrants, the Vulnerable and the Voiceless,” the Pope draws attention to the reality of child migrants, pointing out that among the migrants children constitute the most vulnerable group.<sup>11</sup>

In the Message given for the 104<sup>th</sup> Day of Migrants and Refugees (2018), “Welcoming, Protecting, Promoting and Integrating Migrants and Refugees,” the Pope reiterates that “Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age (Matthew 25:35-43).”<sup>12</sup> The Pope reaffirms that “our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate,” and highlights corresponding responses demanded of us as our ethical responsibility to the migrants.

### **Hospitality to the Migrants: Moral Imperative Here and Now**

According to Pope Francis, “We have a duty toward our brothers and sisters who, for various reasons, have been forced to leave their

<sup>10</sup> Pope Francis, “Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy.”

<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis, “Child Migrants, the Vulnerable and the Voiceless,” Message for the 2017 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160908\\_world-migrants-day-2017.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20160908_world-migrants-day-2017.html)

<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis, “Welcoming, Protecting, Promoting and Integrating Migrants and Refugees,” Message given for the 104<sup>th</sup> Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170815\\_world-migrants-day-2018.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20170815_world-migrants-day-2018.html) [Note: the message was given on 15 August 2017].

homeland: a duty of justice, of civility and of solidarity.”<sup>13</sup> He emphasises, a “moral imperative” in responding to the plight of the migrants.<sup>14</sup> The moral responsibility is to welcome them, to show hospitality towards them. The Pope is aware of the difficulties involved – the political situation, the differences of opinion, possible threat to security, difficulty of integration, religious and cultural differences, and so on. Similarly, he is aware of the unjust political structures and exploitative economic systems which cause migration and which are to be corrected. But, all these do not deter him from defending the cause of the migrants. There is an urgency of the situation. Millions of people are uprooted from their home countries; before their suffering and utter helplessness, no other argument is valid. The immediate response is welcoming them, ensuring their dignity, safety, and well-being. This is the Christian ethical response and responsibility here and now.

Our responsibility is not defined first of all by a detailed analysis of the situation, or entering into a debate over the issue, but by the urgency of the need. That is, for a Christian, the need of the other becomes a duty. My responsibility is defined by my sister/brother who is in need. The need of the migrant sister/brother for dignity, for food, clothing, shelter, for a just living condition becomes my ethical responsibility here and now, to which I have to respond with compassion, hospitality, care and solidarity.

### **Virtue of Justice**

Pope Francis is a Pope of justice and a man who can inspire us to practice the virtue of justice. The Pope has uncompromisingly stood for justice and rights of the migrants. He says, “The church stand at the side of all who work to defend each person’s right to live with dignity.”<sup>15</sup> He says, “we can no longer sustain unacceptable economic

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<sup>13</sup> Gerard O’Connell, “Pope Francis: Protecting the World’s Migrants and Refugees is a Moral Imperative,” *America*, February 21, 2017, <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2017/02/21/pope-francis-protecting-worlds-migrants-and-refugees-moral-imperative>

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. Gerard O’Connell, “Pope Francis: Protecting the World’s Migrants and Refugees is a Moral Imperative.” 4.

<sup>15</sup> Francis, “Message for the 2016 World Day Migrants and Refugees,”



inequality, which prevents us from applying the principle of the universal destination of the earth's goods... One group of individuals cannot control half of the world's resources. We cannot allow for persons and entire peoples to have a right only to gather the remaining crumbs."<sup>16</sup> Pope Francis has repeatedly identified global economic system rooted in inequality as one of the major factors behind migration. This inequality and injustice drives millions of people to poverty and unbearable living conditions, and consequently to migrate to other places looking for better living conditions.

### **Virtue of Solidarity**

As mentioned above, Pope Francis has called the lack of solidarity with migrants and refugees as the 'globalization of indifference.' This makes a person insensitive to the cry of the poor.<sup>17</sup> He has constantly reminded us of God's question to Cain, "Where is your brother?" (Gen 4:9). Thus, he is urging us to acknowledge migrants and refugees as our brothers and sisters and to recognize our responsibility towards them.<sup>18</sup> Solidarity means the capacity to understand the needs of our brothers and sisters who are in difficulty and to take responsibility for their needs.<sup>19</sup> Catholic Social Teaching is founded on the conviction that all of us belong to one human family, and hence we have the obligation to promote the rights and development of all people, irrespective of national boundaries. In particular, wealthy nations and wealthy persons have a greater obligation to promote the development of poorer nations and people. Dignity and intrinsic worth of persons cannot be understood in terms of an individualistic right in isolation, but only in the context of the obligations to human community as a whole. There is a duty of

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<sup>16</sup> Gerard O'Connell, "Pope Francis: Protecting the World's Migrants and Refugees is a Moral Imperative."

<sup>17</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 54.

<sup>18</sup> Donald Kerwin, "What Pope Francis has said on Migrants, Refugees and Immigrants, What He Might Say in the United States," [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/donald-kerwin/what-pope-francis-has-sai\\_b\\_8090332.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/donald-kerwin/what-pope-francis-has-sai_b_8090332.html)

<sup>19</sup> Gerard O'Connell, "Pope Francis: Protecting the World's Migrants and Refugees is a Moral Imperative."

solidarity in the face of tragedies, conflicts, persecutions, violence, that take the lives of so many migrants and refugees. Therefore, the virtue of solidarity demands us to feel one with the weakest, the poorest and most vulnerable. Solidarity must be concretely expressed at every stage of the migratory experience from departure through journey to arrival and return. This is a great responsibility, which the Church intends to share with all believers and men and women of good will, who are called to respond to the many challenges of contemporary migration with generosity, promptness, wisdom and foresight, each according to one's own abilities.<sup>20</sup>

### **Virtue of Hospitality**

Virtue of hospitality to strangers is considered as an important virtue. In this case, it is offering migrants and refugee truly caring and loving hospitality. "For us Christians," the Pope says, "hospitality offered to the weary traveler is offered to Jesus Christ himself, through the newcomer: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me' (Mt 25:35)."<sup>21</sup> In fact, no one is a stranger in God's house, the Church. Hospitality means much more than offering a meal or bed, or making someone feel comfortable in our presence. The simple act of hospitality in the home is based on creating a safe and comfortable space for our guests. Theologically, extending Christian hospitality is fundamentally a response to our experience of God, gifting and honouring human beings with the super abundant hospitality of God.<sup>22</sup>

### **Virtue of Mercy and Compassion**

The virtue of mercy and compassion are the recurring themes of Pope Francis. This is particularly applicable when he speaks about migrants and those who are living in difficult situations. The absence of virtue of mercy and compassion towards the migrants is one of the

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<sup>20</sup> "Welcoming, Protecting, Promoting and Integrating Migrants and Refugees."

<sup>21</sup> As cited by Gerard O'Connell, "Pope Francis: Protecting the World's Migrants and Refugees is a Moral Imperative."

<sup>22</sup> Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000, 124.

fundamental ethical problems of the modern world. Pope Francis calls upon the members of the Church to be compassionate and merciful, asking the them to give justice to the migrants.<sup>23</sup> The Pope's compassion towards the migrants and refugees has been expressed not only through his words, but also his actions, for example, visiting them, washing their feet, offering two refugee families hospitality in Vatican parishes, and so on.

## Conclusion

Migration is a complex phenomenon: The factors that lead to migration are complex; the process of migrating is complex; the response of the locals where migrants arrive is complex; an eventual course of integration into the new context also is complex. However, there is an urgency of the situation, especially when millions of people are uprooted from their homeland, and they are utterly helpless. This situation demands our response here and now, which is expressed through hospitality, compassion, fraternity and solidarity extended to the migrants, one of the most vulnerable groups. In his defence for the rights of the migrants, this has been an important concern of Pope Francis. He also addresses the complexities involved in migration, the unjust socio-political and economic structures that drive people away from their homes. They are to be corrected and a world order based on equality, equity and fraternity is to be built up. At the same time, before our brothers and sisters who suffer, our responsibility of welcoming them and defending their rights and dignity should be given priority. This is the Christian ethical imperative here and now.

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<sup>23</sup> Francis, "Migrants and Refugees: Towards a Better World."

# **Teaching About Human Mobility: How to Respond to Pope Francis' Request to Universities and NGOs**

**René M. Micallef**

In this article, the author reflects on Pope Francis' invitation to Catholic universities to respond to the situation of today's migrants and refugees by doing research on the phenomenon, teaching and becoming engaged in social promotion. After briefly surveying Catholic Social Thought and providing some statistics on human mobility, the article encourages teachers and lecturers (especially in Theology, Philosophy and the Social Sciences) to include this topic in their teaching, and reflects on what to teach and how to teach about human mobility by proposing some elements of a teaching "ethos" from personal experience.

Fr René M. Micallef SJ, STD is a Maltese Jesuit priest, and Associate Professor of Moral Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He lives in Rome and teaches Moral Theology and Social Ethics at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Gregorian University, specializing in topics such as migration, conflict, human rights and the sources of moral reasoning.

## **Introduction**

On Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2017, Pope Francis met representatives of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU), several universities and NGOs in a private audience, at the conclusion of an International Conference entitled "Migrants and Refugees in a Globalized World: Responsibility and Responses of Universities." Pope Francis has repeatedly appealed to Catholic institutions and Catholic voices in civil society to be proactive in promoting the rights and welfare of migrants and refugees and in changing the negative narrative around human mobility, especially in developed countries. Listening to this



appeal, Catholic Universities have started to reflect on what their contribution could be, given their competence and their resources.

During the audience, and building on the suggestions coming from Baggio and Czerny, Pope Francis requested a contribution from Catholic Universities in three areas that are within their competence: research, teaching, and social promotion. As regards *research*, he asked universities to “harmonize scientific with theological research” and to engage in studies (even long-term) that seek to understand the remote causes of forced migration, with the aim of identifying practical solutions. Furthermore, he invited universities to focus on “the reactions - negative in principle, at times even discriminatory and xenophobic - that the arrival of migrants is generating in countries of ancient Christian Tradition,” asking Catholic universities to take such reactions into account “in order to recommend programmes for educating consciences.”<sup>1</sup> He also invited such universities to “deepen theological reflection on migration as a sign of the times.”<sup>2</sup> As regards *social promotion*, he suggested that Catholic Universities be active in the process that will hopefully lead to the adoption of two Global Compacts, one on migrants and the other on refugees, in the second half of 2018, by the international community: Baggio and Czerny’s dicastery have already produced a list of 20 “action points” that could inspire advocacy in this area, based on solid research and the experience of Catholic NGOs in the field of human mobility.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, as regards *teaching*, (besides facilitating the recognition of qualifications), Pope Francis invited universities to invest both in

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Members of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU),” Website of the Holy See, 4 November 2017, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/november/documents/papa-francesco\\_20171104\\_federazione-universita-cattoliche.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/november/documents/papa-francesco_20171104_federazione-universita-cattoliche.html).

<sup>2</sup> Idem.

<sup>3</sup> Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development of the Holy See, “Towards the Global Compacts on Migrants and on Refugees 2018” (Palazzo San Callisto, Vatican City: Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development of the Holy See, 2017), [www.migrants-refugees.va](http://www.migrants-refugees.va).

educating refugees and migrants (through distance learning and study grants), and in educating “their own students - some of whom will become political leaders, entrepreneurs and creators of culture - to understand the migratory phenomenon, in a perspective of justice, global co-responsibility and communion in cultural diversity.”<sup>4</sup>

In what follows (sections 2-4), I will deal mainly about my experience in this latter kind of education, which also entails “harmonizing scientific with theological research” as Pope Francis suggests in the area of research. I will however start by arguing briefly why teaching students about human mobility today is a must in all centres of tertiary education, including (and maybe especially so) in seminaries and Pontifical Universities (section 1).

## **1. The Need to Educate our Students**

### **Scientifically and Theologically about Human Mobility**

#### ***1.1 An Urgent Task for Social Science:***

##### ***Engaging Catholic Social Thought on Human Mobility***

I teach at a Pontifical University in Rome. Most of my students will probably not become “political leaders, entrepreneurs and creators of culture,” but rather religious leaders. If Catholic Social Thought (CST) has been deemed the Church’s “best kept secret,” then CST on migration is much less known, even among the clergy living in areas with considerable emigration, transit migration and new arrivals, and among the various Catholic faithful and movements that are active in the fields of reception, integration and organization of diasporas. Certainly, it is an urgent task for theological ethics to engage Catholic Social Thought on Human Mobility, but other disciplines - and especially social science scholars in Catholic universities - should also engage this body of thought.

Pope Francis invites us to help our students “to understand the migratory phenomenon, in a perspective of justice, global co-responsibility and communion in cultural diversity.” Most of these documents seek to do all of this, speaking to a wide audience and using an ecclesiastical style of writing. Given that we need to teach about a

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<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, “Pope Francis’ Address to IFCU.”

rapidly-changing phenomenon in a particular cultural and political context, and that ecclesiastical writing rarely engages directly and rigorously with social science or natural science data,<sup>5</sup> we cannot simply present these documents to our students without providing a whole range of other materials. Yet, the ethical principles and basic rights contained in these documents have a lasting quality: they help to orient our discernment on local laws and policies (as active citizens who participate in policymaking via civil society), on the advocacy we could engage in, on the research that we need to pursue in our own cultural, political and historic situations. CST makes several rights claims on behalf of migrants and refugees, and on behalf of sending and receiving communities. Such claims should be understood as elements integrated in a system that makes sense as a whole (rather than cherry-picked and taken individually). Furthermore, they should not be treated as absolutes but as *prima facie* valid claims often in conflict or tension with other claims, and hence they need to be prudentially adjudicated with the help of a series of principles.

Among the rights discussed in the above mentioned documents, the following are worth noting: the universal right to a *nationality*, the right of refugees to *asylum* (and to non-refoulement), the right to *migrate* (including the right to enter and settle in a foreign country, in certain cases), the right to *adequate employment and to basic human freedoms in one's own country* (often called “the right not to migrate” in recent texts, a slogan which however risks being hijacked by xenophobes), the right to be helped to integrate in a new country, the *right to receive equal pay for equal work*, the right (of host communities and migrants) to *live in a cohesive and well-ordered society*, the right to *limit “brain drain” and capital flight*, and the right to *sovereignty* (well-understood, and limited by ethical imperatives). Among the important principles that we need to consider in adjudication among such rights, in practice, CST speaks of the following: *the universal destination of created goods, solidarity,*

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<sup>5</sup> René M. Micallef, “Laudatosi’ e la sua metodologia: un critico ascolto delle scie enze empiriche?,” in *Laudatosi’*. *Linee di lettura interdisciplinari per la cura della casa comune*, ed. Humberto Miguel Yáñez (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2017), 13–48.

*subsidiarity, the priority of labour over capital, the preferential option for the poor, the respect for legality dependent on the moral acceptability of civil laws, and the promotion of healthy “catholic” or “cosmopolitan” ways of being patriotic.*

All of this needs to be integrated via civic virtues, that is, good habits and attitudes that shape our behaviour in the public sphere. In his message for the 104<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees (14 January 2018), Pope Francis comments on four verbs: to *welcome*, to *protect*, to *promote*, and to *integrate*. The corresponding civic virtues are: hospitality, sheltering, advocacy and fraternity (or “kinship-building,” or “convivencia”). Training students in such virtues, through a series of communal and social practices, is a key part of what Catholic universities should be about.

Why is it urgent that social sciences, and not only moral theology (and persons involved in pastoral work), engage in a dialogue with this body of thinking? Certainly, today’s migrants and refugees are not in the exact same situations as those of the 1950s and 1960s when most of these rights claims and principles were developed or applied to the phenomenon of human mobility. Some elements may need to be refined or updated through critical input from scientific studies and people working in the field. On the other hand, social science research is never completely “neutral”: when we design questionnaires, interpret quantitative research and interviews, or decide what issues to delve into, we have certain interests and priorities and worldviews in our mind that somewhat shape our decisions. CST on migration can provide an adequate and justifiable worldview and a series of priorities to orient social-scientific research and philosophical reflection on such issues.

## **1.2 An Urgent Task for Theological Ethics:**

### ***Engaging Social Science Data on Human Mobility***

Most people in developed countries think that we are in the midst of an unprecedented migration and refugee crisis. To some extent, this perception is unwarranted: for over half a century, the number of migrants has remained at roughly 3% of the world’s population.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> International Organization for Migration, “Global Migration Trends Factsheet,” OM’s Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, 2015, <http://>



At the same time, the global population rose (from 3 to 7.6 billion).<sup>7</sup> The number of refugees actually fell between 1990 and 2010 (from 18.5 to 16.3 million), though more recently it has increased (to 22.5 million in 2017)<sup>8</sup> mainly because of the war in Syria. Some experts, such as Stéphane Jacquemet (the UNHCR Regional Representative for Southern Europe), provocatively suggest that the Western World does not have a refugee or a migrant crisis, but rather an “identity crisis” in the face of recent migrant arrivals.<sup>9</sup> During the Syrian crisis, small and relatively poorer countries like Uganda or Lebanon have received more asylum seekers than the whole of Europe and have managed to cope relatively well, in spite of the massive flows.

In these last 30 years or so, there has been an impressive development in migration studies that has touched many social science disciplines. The data and reflection produced help us to recognize that mass human mobility is a structural part of today’s world, and not simply a temporary crisis, while at the same time debunking a whole series of “migration and refugee myths.”<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, of the 244 million people on the move in 2015, many did not simply travel freely, moved by a desire to see the world or work in a different culture.<sup>11</sup> To be sure, the people

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<sup>7</sup> Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, “World Population Prospects 2017,” Population Division, 2017, <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/>.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Figures at a Glance,” UNHCR, 19 June 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

<sup>9</sup> I refer here to Jacquemet’s comments in his keynote speech delivered on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017 at the above mentioned international conference “Migrants and Refugees in a Globalized World: Responsibility and Responses of Universities,” held at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Wihtol de Wenden and Madeleine Benoît-Guyod, *Atlas des migrations: Un équilibre mondial à inventer*, 4th edition (Paris: Autrement, 2016); Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas, and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration, Fifth Edition: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 5th ed. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2013); Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> International Organization for Migration, “Global Migration Trends Factsheet.”

who suffer most in this process are the forcibly displaced (65.6 million in 2017), which include refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people. However, many migrants are considered in the data as travelling mainly for “economic reasons” (though this often includes environmentally-displaced persons who lose their livelihoods due to climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters, and hence have very urgent “economic reasons” to move, in order to survive). Some of these “economic migrants” risk their lives in harrowing journeys trying to reach a first-world economy that promises a well-paying job; many leave their families and suffer a culture shock only to find themselves working abroad in very harsh conditions.

All of this is related to the huge wealth disparities in our world, where 0.7% of the human population owns 45.9% of the wealth of the world, while 70.1% of the human population owns 2.7% of the wealth of the world.<sup>12</sup> In a globalized world where money, products and services move freely, but not human beings, borders and sovereignty (while politically and legally necessary) have become useful tools to keep the poor out of those places where global wealth is hoarded and concentrated. Mass human mobility, as we know it today, is a reaction to this: it allows some skills transfers and redistributes money to poorer families and regions via remittances (which reached \$ 601 billion in 2016, more than three times the size of development aid<sup>13</sup>). Yet, as a counter reaction, wealthy countries have made it harder and harder for poor people to enter their territory legally, militarized their borders, and taken draconian measures to keep migrants out. The result is a huge loss of human life due to dangerous sea and desert crossings, and due to the “way of doing business” of smugglers and traffickers: between the 1<sup>st</sup> January and the time of writing of this paper on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017, 5014 migrant fatalities were recorded worldwide.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Credit Suisse Research Institute, “Global Wealth Report 2017” (Zurich: Credit Suisse, November 2017), 21, <http://publications.credit-suisse.com/index.cfm/publikationen-shop/research-institute/global-wealth-report-2017-en/>.

<sup>13</sup> World Bank, “Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016,” World Bank, 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/migration-and-remittances>.

<sup>14</sup> International Organization for Migration, “Missing Migrants Project,” Missing Migrants, 13 November 2017, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>.

Since the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 attacks, migrants and refugees are associated, in the minds of many people, with “crime.” People conflate irregular entry (criminalized by some governments), acts of global terrorism linked to religious fundamentalism (and hence to “foreigners,” in many countries), and antisocial behaviours in some refugee parents suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and construe what has been called a “crimmigration crisis,” one of the most dangerous of the many myths spread by xenophobes in our world.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the global recession, unemployment and the erosion of wages and benefits in the first world have also created anger and frustration among the working classes, and migrants and refugees are often easy scapegoats. The idea that “migrants are taking our jobs” - based on the intuitive but erroneous notion that an economy has only a fixed number of jobs which can be filled either by natives or by migrants - spreads easily, even in emerging economies, and can do incredible social, political and economic harm.

The major data produced in the fields of sociology, demography and economics need to be absorbed and digested not only by social science students at our universities, but by all university students who should be opinion leaders for today and tomorrow’s generations, helping people to unmask fake news and expose the myths spread by fearmongers and xenophobic politicians. Yet, it is also an urgent task for theological ethics to remain updated so as to better form consciences and accompany decisions. Catholic Social Thought, especially as applied and presented to the faithful in the documents of regional bishops’ conferences, needs to partner with scientifically-informed theologians and theologically-informed social scientists in order to remain receivable, topical and soundly rooted in reality, since, as Pope Francis often reminds us, “realities are more important than ideas.”<sup>16</sup>

## 2. My Experience in Teaching about Human Mobility

### 2.1 Teaching on Politically -

#### *Sensitive Issues in a Catholic University*

In *Ex corde ecclesiae* (1990, n.13), St. John Paul II states that “the objective of a Catholic University is to assure in an institutional manner

<sup>15</sup> Juliet Stumpf, “The Crimmigration Crisis: Immigrants, Crime, and Sovereign Power,” *American University Law Review* 56, no. 2 (December 2006): 367–419.

<sup>16</sup> Cf., for instance, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 231ff.

a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of society and culture.” He further notes that, “without in any way neglecting the acquisition of useful knowledge, a Catholic University is distinguished by its free search for the whole truth, [...] that fundamental value without which freedom, justice and human dignity are extinguished” (idem, n.4). Over the last decades, there has been several interesting articles published on the role of Catholic Universities in today’s world.<sup>17</sup>

Several recent sociological studies show how “facts” can backfire in this way.<sup>18</sup> For example, Gaines *et al.*, analysed how opinions in the US concerning the Bush administration’s handling of the Iraq war evolved as real-world conditions changed, and concluded that “actual beliefs [...] become relevant for political judgments only when people interpret them. Interpretations provide opportunities for partisans to rationalize their existing opinions.”<sup>19</sup> In their study, it was clear that “most respondents held similar, fairly accurate beliefs about facts. But interpretations varied across partisan groups in predictable ways. In turn, interpretations, not beliefs, drove opinions. Perversely, the better informed more effectively used interpretations to buttress their existing partisan views.”<sup>20</sup> Similar results were found in studies by Taber and

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<sup>17</sup> To give just one example, Fr Hervé Carrier, a Canadian Jesuit and sociologist, rector of the Pontifical Gregorian University from 1966 to 1978 and president of the International Federation of Catholic Universities from 1970 to 1980, wrote extensively on this topic. Cf. Hervé Carrier, “Les Responsabilités de l’Université Moderne,” *Gregorianum* 50, no. 3 (1969): 463–83; “How Will Catholic Universities Confront World Development?,” *Gregorianum* 52, no. 1 (1971): 5–25; “Pour Une Politique de La Recherche Dans l’Église: Rôle Des Universités Catholiques,” *Gregorianum* 53, no. 1 (1972): 5–44; “Les Universités Catholiques Face Au Pluralisme Culturel,” *Gregorianum* 58, no. 4 (1977): 607–40; “New Cultures: A Challenge to Universities,” *Gregorianum* 63, no. 3 (1982): 507–23.

<sup>18</sup> Joe Keohane, “How Facts Backfire: Researchers Discover a Surprising Threat to Democracy: Our Brains,” *Boston Globe*, 11 July 2010, sec. Sunday.

<sup>19</sup> “Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq,” *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 4 (1 November 2007): 957–74, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4622608>.

<sup>20</sup> Idem.



Lodge and by Nyhan: strongly partisan views on hot issues not only remain unchallenged when *scientific data* is provided that should normally weaken the basis of their arguments; they also fail to react to *personal testimony* in ways deemed reasonable or rational by eternal observers.<sup>21</sup>

Nyhan *et al.* show that when politically informed Tea Party Republicans were provided with clear factual information trying to correct myths regarding the Affordable Care Act, they became *even more convinced* that such myths were true.<sup>22</sup> Studies by Cobb and Kuklinski also point to the fact that many a time, arguments *against* policy change, even when poor or not supported by rigorous studies, often carry more weight, since “people tend to be both risk and loss averse [and thus,] con arguments, which accentuate the unpleasant consequences of a proposed policy [tend to] quickly and soundly resonate with the average citizen. Moreover, fear and anger, which con arguments presumably evoke, are among the strongest emotions [...], and serve as readily available sources of information when people evaluate an impending policy initiative.”<sup>23</sup>

All of this has to be kept in mind when facing our students in a lecture hall, or organizing events which try to change public opinion and public attitudes regarding immigrants, and when proposing policy changes that alter the *status quo*. Interestingly, in many of these studies, people who are better read and have a higher level of education seem to be less ready to put aside their prejudices, meet the other, listen, and

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<sup>21</sup> Charles S. Taber and Milton Lodge, “Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (2006): 755–769, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00214.x>. Brendan Nyhan, “The Limited Effects of Testimony on Political Persuasion,” *Public Choice* 148, no. 3–4 (September 2011): 283–312, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org.proxy.bc.edu/10.1007/s11127-010-9655-0>.

<sup>22</sup> Brendan Nyhan, Jason Reifler, and Peter A. Ubel, “The Hazards of Correcting Myths About Health Care Reform,” *Medical Care* 51, no. 2 (February 2013): 127–32, <https://doi.org/10.1097/MLR.0b013e318279486b>.

<sup>23</sup> Michael D. Cobb and James H. Kuklinski, “Changing Minds: Political Arguments and Political Persuasion,” *American Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 1 (1 January 1997): 114–15, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111710>.

let their opinions be challenged and their hearts be changed. Are these the future leaders we are training in our universities?

## 2.2 *Teaching on Politically -*

### *Sensitive Issues in a Pontifical University*

Pontifical Universities are, of course “Catholic” universities, but they stand in a category of their own. They are established by the Holy See and are directly under its authority; their structure is governed by the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (1979, currently being updated) which also establishes the regulations for granting academic degrees in sacred faculties, among them Canon Law, Philosophy, Sacred Theology and Sacred Scripture. The Pontifical Gregorian University, successor of the Roman College (founded in 1551), is the archetypical “Pontifical University,” where most students - coming from all over the world - enrol to train for priesthood or to get an academic specialization so as to directly serve their diocese or their religious congregation. The university has 6 faculties, and several institutes and centres, but a good half of its students are enrolled in the Theology faculty, which is also the faculty to which I belong as a theological ethicist.

I teach two major courses at the Pontifical Gregorian University which have to do with human mobility. One course, bearing the title “The Ethics of Immigration Policymaking,” brings together data on the situation of migrants and refugees - especially those travelling to or settled in developed countries -, a reflection on the policymaking mechanisms regarding sovereignty and borders in such countries (which includes elements of political philosophy and international law), and a theological ethics framework blending rights, principles and virtues, and inspired by Catholic Social Thought, to guide voting, activism and policymaking. Another course, on “Using Scripture in Ethics: The Issue of the Stranger,” seeks to form students in using Scripture honestly, scientifically and responsibly when reflecting on thorny issues in moral theology, and brings together an exegetical toolbox, a reflection on hermeneutics and the analysis of a number of biblical texts which speak about the strangers and sojourners. In recent years, I have also taught a module on environmentally-displaced persons within a course on

*Laudatosi*’,<sup>24</sup> and a course about the ethics of peace and conflict, which includes a reflection on the plight of persons displaced by various kinds of violence and war.

I have to admit that my experience of teaching at university level is limited (this is my fifth year of teaching) and that I teach these courses in a particular environment: most of my students are priests or members of religious orders, and most are living in Italy but are not Italians. I teach these courses at masters’ level, in small classes, to students who choose these courses from a long list of possible courses, so in general I teach to a select and receptive audience. I have also organized events on various topics linked to human mobility; these attract a wider variety of participants and often prove to be a more challenging - and sometimes more stimulating - teaching experience.

In what follows, I would like to use what I have learnt from this admittedly limited experience, so to temper and to ground the rationale underpinning what I teach and how I teach it.

### 3. What to Teach

#### 3.1 Working within the bounds of our institutions

Let us start with the question “what to teach?” To some extent *what we teach depends on the programmes and curricula which our deans and heads of departments fashion*, according to their view of what topics are relevant to the formation of students in a certain area of knowledge and what would make a coherent whole. Yet we often have enough freedom to propose new optional courses and seminars, or to suggest a rethink of the programmes, and when asked to teach certain classical courses we still have freedom to select the examples and case studies that we feel can introduce our students to certain topics.

When I arrived at the Pontifical Gregorian University, I was asked to teach a course on peace at the Faculty of Social Sciences, and a

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<sup>24</sup> Carlotta Venturi and René M. Micallef, “*Glisfollatiambientiali allaluce di Laudatosi*”, in *Laudatosi. Linee di lettura interdisciplinari per la curadella casa comune*, ed. Humberto Miguel Yáñez (Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2017), 193–221.

course on Christian Ethics and Politics at the Department of Moral Theology. I focused my “peace” course on contemporary conflicts, nationalism, genocide, transitional justice and terrorism, touching in many ways on the situation of migrants and refugees. The Politics and Christian Ethics course became my course on the Ethics of Immigration Policymaking. Later on, I proposed a course on “The Use of the Bible in Christian Ethics,” which I felt was lacking in our programme. When I was asked to build this course, I decided to use the biblical texts concerning the stranger as a case study: half of the course is dedicated to reading exegetical analysis of biblical texts using methods from different schools while seeking to understand critically how exegetes use Scripture to make ethical claims, whether such claims make any sense to a moral theologian, and whether they can be used to guide policymaking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Besides simply teaching courses, I soon got involved in organizing events for the general public. In my first year in Rome, I subtitled a documentary film in Spanish about *Las Patronas*, a group of women farmers in Mexico who have been providing food and shelter for weary migrants passing by their fields for more than 20 years, and I invited Norma Romero - one of the founders - over to share her experience.<sup>25</sup> Many other similar events followed, once I carved a niche for this kind of activity within the university.

### ***3.2 Working within the Bounds of our Clients’ Tastes***

Whether we think that offering many choices to students to personalize their studies is a postmodern commodification<sup>26</sup> of education

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<sup>25</sup> Alberto Najjar, “Las Patronas que alimentan migrantes en México,” BBC Mundo - Noticias, 5 September 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2012/09/120821\\_patronas\\_migracion\\_mexico\\_zetas\\_an.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2012/09/120821_patronas_migracion_mexico_zetas_an.shtml).

<sup>26</sup> Rajani Naidoo and Ian Jamieson, “Knowledge in the Marketplace: The Global Commodification of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education,” in *Internationalizing Higher Education: Critical Explorations of Pedagogy and Policy*, ed. Peter Ninnes and Meeri Hellstén (Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media, 2005), 37–51; Liesl Orr, “Globalisation and Universities: Towards the ‘Market University’?,” *Social Dynamics* 23, no. 1 (1 January 1997): 42–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533959708458619>.



or a form of *curapersonalis*, we live in a university world where students have become clients in the marketplace of ideas. Thus, to some extent, in programmes where students get to choose a certain number of courses, *what we teach also depends on our students' interests and our ability to market our courses*. I have had the experience in the past of having prepared what seemed to me a stimulating new course, only to see it cancelled on the first week of October since there were too few students who chose it. I was disadvantaged at the time, since I was a newcomer and my name on a programme meant nothing, and both academic units I taught in had very few students: the numbers have picked up considerably since then. Yet, the experience forced me to try to understand what students at this university find attractive and how to describe and adapt what I wanted to teach to the tastes of my clients.

### ***3.3 Working within the Bounds of our Discipline***

Certainly, *what we teach also depends on our formation and expertise*. Yet, we can open up new areas of interest and research within our discipline, and also include other disciplines in what we teach, by adopting an interdisciplinary approach. Of course, there are limits to how much we can say on behalf of experts from other disciplines. Some time ago, a well-published sociologist of migration was invited to give a lecture to our students about the phenomenon of human mobility today. The audience expected her to present a sociological overview, and to stick to her discipline. To be sure, her 90-minute presentation did contain sociological data and summarised results from sociological studies, but the main thrust of her talk was a reflection on political philosophy and ethics, and more specifically: sovereignty, the principle of exclusion implicit in the concept of a modern nation-state, human rights in international law, our duties towards strangers from the viewpoint of a universalist ethics, and the importance of rule of law and consistent rule-following.

To some extent I was thrilled and stimulated to see that a social scientist could be aware of the lack of widespread ethical and philosophical reflection on these topics, in the context of our current debates on human mobility, to the point of being sucked into my fields of expertise. Surely, I did not fully agree with the ethical and philosophical

worldview underpinning her arguments and her conclusions. Furthermore, her approach made me doubt whether she was aware that there are other approaches to ethics and to political philosophy out there, relevant to her thinking, that she seemed not to have considered. Yet, it is flattering to see empirical scientists passionate about my world, which many still conceive a completely useless branch of the academia, populated with lofty ideals, wishful thinking and hair-splitting distinctions.

More importantly, however, this experience made me think about the fact that many lecturers end up teaching ethics implicitly or explicitly, depending on the way they study and present social and natural phenomena. This is a great opportunity for our universities, yet if done without a certain critical approach and a certain humility, it is also a big challenge, since it is hard to know if in our lecture halls certain values, rights and duties which are problematic from the viewpoint of Catholic Social Thought are being presented as though they were hard, factual social-scientific or biological truths.

## 4. How to Teach

### 4.1 *Developing an Ethos*

After touching on the “what,” let us now come to the “how.” I will bracket the purely pedagogical issues like learning outcomes, course design, whether to use Powerpoint or Prezi or audiovisual “learning objects,” and so on; several useful handbooks are available on these topics.<sup>27</sup> Besides being a migration scholar, looking at human mobility from an ethics viewpoint, I also teach fundamental moral theology, focusing on epistemology and methodology in ethics. This means I’m interested in the sources of moral reasoning and in the methods we use to do research, construct arguments and propose behaviours and policies, and in how to present all this to others.

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<sup>27</sup> For example: Linda B. Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors*, 4th edition (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016); Wilbert McKeachie and Marilla Svinicki, *McKeachie’s Teaching Tips*, 14th edition (Australia/ ; United States: Wadsworth Publishing, 2013); Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*, 2nd edition (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009); Susan A. Ambrose et al., *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

Whatever our discipline and whatever we teach on a thorny subject like human mobility, I believe we should develop an *ethos*, which entails both a method and a series of best practices so as to respect what we value, as citizens, as intellectuals, as members of faith communities. In what follows, I will list and comment some of the values that guide my ethos when teaching about asylum-seeking and migration.

## 4.2 Talking from Experience

There is talking about one's experiences and then there's talking from experience. Much as I appreciate Paul Ricœur and the importance of imagination in will formation, I'm not very keen on talking about myself or telling stories in class: I believe young people today should be pushed to wrestle with concepts, since they are somewhat addicted to narratives. To be sure, narratives are useful to ingratiate an audience at the beginning and to provide food for thought. Yet, I feel I can communicate my experiences to my students in many ways, without necessarily having to say that I have done university studies in six different countries and four languages, that I've lived outside my country for 18 years, or that I've worked with migrant children in Spain, with Hispanic prisoners in the US, or with refugees in Uganda. Given that I immersed myself deeply into the cultures of the different countries where I have lived, or at least I like to think so, I believe that the passion with which I make my arguments in favour of the rights and duties of the many people I care about betrays my lived experience, and that my cosmopolitan perspective on things flows out in whatever I say and do, in the authors I choose, in the bibliographies I provide, in the cases I examine, and in the way I interact with students coming from different countries.

## 4.3 Listening

Listening, and asking students to listen, is a very important attitude. We should listen to migrants and refugees, but also to the host communities. We should listen with empathy, but also remain critical of stereotypical, scripted, black-on-white narratives that both xenophobic politicians and philoxenic NGOs often expect the "witnesses" on both sides of the debate to abide by, so as "not to complicate things and muddy the message." Are the migrants really

the only people who have loud parties, leave rubbish around, have alcohol problems and react aggressively when spoken to in a certain way on certain subjects, or are these rather general problems found in most housing projects around the world? Was this neighbourhood really so different before they arrived? Is it really true that the integration process in Italy or in Malta or elsewhere is a total failure? Is it true that many migrants are not sure whether they can honestly apply for asylum or not?

Beyond listening and opening one's heart to the experience of other, I believe we should also empower people to speak. It is hard for traumatized migrants and refugees to trust anyone with something close to what really happened to them on the way. It took a Rwandan, who was a very close friend of mine, many years to even mention the genocide in a conversation with me, let alone tell me what he did to survive. When I was in Kampala, it was hard for a Ugandan sister (let alone a westerner like me) to understand why one of our students, a young boy who had escaped the fighting in Eastern DRC, suddenly decided to go back to the conflict zone to consult a witch doctor, feeling he was safer there than in Kampala where somebody was targeting him with the evil eye. The fact that some Africans may have a different concept of safety than we (and other Africans) do doesn't make Congolese refugees any less worthy of applying for international protection, but it certainly dents some of the narratives we are used to hearing. As academics and educators, we are invited to dig deeper and seek to understand the more complex strata of reality that are often edited out of many narratives.

On the other hand, I can also train myself to read with the same empathy the research done in London in 1960s about the Maltese being seen as criminals (due to a few stories that news editors chose to give prominence to at the time).<sup>28</sup> Many of the Londoners interviewed who had Maltese friends spoke very highly of these friends, deeming them a strange and utter exception, while insisting that the Maltese in general

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<sup>28</sup> Geoff Dench, *Maltese in London: A Case-Study in the Erosion of Ethnic Consciousness* (London and Boston, MA: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1975).



(namely, all those they did not know) were shady people or criminals.<sup>29</sup> Surely, many people in Malta and in Rome today have similar attitudes towards certain groups of migrants; listening to them and helping them listen to themselves may hopefully allow them to see and even admit, at some point, that their narratives may not be entirely objective and consistent. Yet, we cannot approach people living in poorer neighbourhoods where migrants and refugees tend to settle, people who struggle every day with the question of how to make these neighbourhoods safer, cleaner, better served and more liveable for their children, expecting them to abide by their duty to host strangers on our behalf and to talk about their experience of the other in ways which are always consistent and politically correct.

Listening to my students is also part of this process, especially those who hail from certain cultures where students do not dare raise their hand in class, let alone question or challenge an author or a lecturer. One way I do this is by encouraging students to share their ideas on an online “forum” after the lecture,<sup>30</sup> and gently nudging the students who are most shy and reserved to join the discussion, and eventually post longer and deeper contributions, one step at a time.

#### ***4.4 Seeking Interdisciplinary Approaches***

Listening to other disciplines forms part of the “listening” process as well, but here the process is more circular: ethics both listens to, while also challenging, the human sciences and the other religious sciences and theological disciplines. More specifically, in what I teach

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<sup>29</sup> Idem. For another important study in the liminality of Maltese migrants, cf. Andrea L. Smith, *Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe: Maltese Settlers in Algeria and France* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Sui Fai John Mak, Roy Williams, and Jenny Mackness, “Blogs and Forums as Communication and Learning Tools in a MOOC,” in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Networked Learning 2010*, ed. Lone Dirckinck-Holmfeld et al. (Lancaster: University of Lancaster, 2010), 275–84; Anoush Margaryan, Allison Littlejohn, and Gabrielle Vojt, “Are Digital Natives a Myth or Reality? University Students’ Use of Digital Technologies,” *Computers & Education* 56, no. 2 (1 February 2011): 429–40, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2010.09.004>.

and publish, I give ample space and consideration to sociology, economics, criminology, history, social psychology and biblical exegesis. Qua sciences, these disciples tend to seek a “view from nowhere in particular,” or at least to allow the researcher and her readers to distance themselves somehow from the reality which they are studying, a reality which they also inhabit as a life-world. Yet, only those who have missed or ignored the grand epistemological debates of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or who have little practical knowledge of the world of research, will insist today that the use of one sociological theory, rather than another, the framing and asking of certain questions in a survey, rather than others, or the use of certain assumptions and simplifications in econometrics, rather than others, can be value-neutral.<sup>31</sup>

#### ***4.5 Holding Fast to Intellectual Honesty***

All this brings us to another important point. We cannot but be selective in what research we use, coming from other disciplines, and in what authors we find useful and fitting with what we teach. I do not give my students texts to read coming from researchers working for think-tanks financed by nativist and anti-immigrant lobbies, or studies patently designed to sustain hard-line ideological positions I deem dangerous or morally unacceptable. Yet, I do make an effort to read - and to offer to my more critical and mature students - serious research coming from authors and perspectives that I do not agree with. In the process, I seek to lay bare their assumptions and methodology, to see whether or not the

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<sup>31</sup> To give one example that illustrates the point, I often point to the debate between David Card, George Borjas and Giovanni Peri regarding whether labour migration is bad for autochthonous US workers. Cf. George J. Borjas, *Heaven's Door: Immigration Policy and the American Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); David Card, “Is the New Immigration Really so Bad?,” *The Economic Journal* 115, no. 507 (1 November 2005): F300–323, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0297.2005.01037.x>; Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, “Additional Case Studies: 10.2 The Borjas versus Card Debate: Is Labour Immigration Bad for U.S. Workers?,” *Age of Migration Companion Website*, 2012, <http://www.age-of-migration.com/na/resources/casestudies.html>; Giovanni Peri and VasilYasenov, “The Labor Market Effects of a Refugee Wave: Applying the Synthetic Control Method to the Mariel Boatlift” (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, December 2015), <https://doi.org/10.3386/w21801>.

conclusions of such research are indeed warranted alternatives to the positions I cherish and promote as a Catholic ethicist and an educator. If they are, I have an obligation, stemming from intellectual honesty, somewhat to present them to my students. I also have a responsibility to present valid critiques and objections made against the positions and thesis that I (and Catholic Social Thought) support.

#### ***4.6 Appealing Intelligently to Religious Traditions***

I have just mentioned Catholic Social Thought. As a moral theologian teaching at a Pontifical University, I am expected to promote a certain tradition and to think from within this tradition. In many ways, this is freeing and enriching. I do not have to pretend to be who I'm not, or to offer only partial and secular arguments, which I don't find entirely convincing, to sustain my claims. In the global North, our students and the general public are more willing to listen to arguments rooted in a religious tradition today than in the past. Yet, being rooted in a tradition is truly freeing and enriching when we stick to intellectual honesty in what we say and teach, when we deeply respect other traditions and non-believers, and when we hold fast to the idea that ethical norms and virtuous practices are binding insofar as they are rational and reasonable (so as to convince the consciences of people of good will), and not simply by virtue of their being promulgated by an authority that speaks on behalf of God, or of their mere antiquity.

#### ***4.7 Not Being afraid to Touch the Deeper Issues***

The phenomenon of human mobility is a litmus test for the maturity of a democratic society, its ability to serenely and responsibly discuss complex issues regarding its identity and its project for the future. It forces us to think about whether our welfare states are sustainable, about what negative effects of globalization are we ready to put up with, about what kind of people we are ready to die for or support by giving up part of our income for their wellbeing, about what kind of citizens we want the daughters and sons of strangers - and therefore also our children - to become. The notion of sovereignty naturally comes to the fore: to what extent can we *uphold* our countries' sovereignty when defending our right to keep people out, and to what extent can we *question* the sovereignty of other countries when claiming that we should help migrants

and refugees stay home by effectively forcing their governments to deal with issues of human rights violations and bad governance?

Bringing up such deeper questions in a paper or a lecture hall is challenging, but it helps our readers and students to better understand the causes and hopefully start looking for real solutions to the big problems of our world. Nonetheless, we are often tempted to stick to the safer and simpler world of strategic politics and focused research where we take for granted the political reality that we know and simply deal with the symptoms and the epiphenomena.

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Aiming to Touch the Heart and Challenge the Mind**

I have mentioned narratives and imagination before: we need to touch the heart of our students. But as academic institutions, we also need to challenge the mind. Pope Francis, in many ways, encourages us to come down from our ivory towers<sup>32</sup> and come out from behind our desks, and our students - constantly bombarded with images, emoticons and telegraphic messages - have little tolerance for complex reasoning and sophisticated concepts. We cannot serve these students without reaching out to them, adapting to their world, and speaking their language. But we cannot, on the other hand, become yet another stall in the supermarket of emotions and superficial ideas.

Whatever we teach, and however we teach it, the dialectic between heart and mind needs to be kept alive. This dialectic will help us find ways to include teaching on the plight of poor migrants and refugees in today's world in a myriad of academic syllabuses, debunking the many myths spread by fearmongers and demagogues. It will allow us, I believe, to engage others effectively on the phenomenon of human mobility and especially on the aspects of this phenomenon which engender fear, anxiety and anger among our students, event attendees and dialogue partners, hence enabling us to respond effectively to the challenge that Pope Francis sets before us.

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<sup>32</sup> Pope Francis, "Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night (15 April 2017)," The Holy See, 15 April 2017, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2017/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170415\\_omelia-veglia-pasquale.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170415_omelia-veglia-pasquale.html).



## Book Review

**Kuncheria Pathil**, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement*,  
Delhi: ISPCK, 2017, pp. XXXVIII + 190, Price Rs 275 (US \$ 15)

The latest book by Dr. Kuncheria Pathil, *Future of the Ecumenical Movement* (ISPCK, 2017, ISBN: 978-81-8465-604-6) is a very personal and theological outlook of an Indian theologian who dedicated his entire academic life from 1969 right upto this day in the field of ecumenism about the present challenges, problems and ambiguities and the future trajectories of ecumenical movement within the Church. The concern is presented with academic excellence under five chapter heads. The chapters follow a clear logical sequence in systematically taking the readers to the problem and the possible solutions. It is a highly useful handbook for all students and academicians of ecumenism.

The theme of the book is developed in this sequence: a historical outline of ecumenical movement, Roman Catholic approach to ecumenism, approach of World Council of Churches (WCC) to ecumenism, the present challenges, problems and ambiguities in field of ecumenism, and the emerging ecumenical trajectories. In the introduction of the book the author presents the entire matter with intellectual integrity stating his personal commitment and tireless academic and ecclesial undertakings in the field of ecumenism for about 50 years (half a century!). That is the real authoritativeness of the work. The Church ought to listen to the theological conviction of a genuine Christian theologian who specialized in a particular field for half a century.

The first chapter outlines the growth of the ecumenical movement and the different stages of its theological journey. The Chapter also sets the book with a brief outline of the contemporary ecumenical movements. This movement is seen as 'the movement among the Churches in order to rediscover their visible unity so that the Church

may become more credible and effective sign of unity in the world.' The second chapter that focuses on the Roman Catholic approach to ecumenism begins with a historical overview of the development within Catholic Church in this regard. The chapter critically looks at the triumphalistic approach of the Catholic Church towards other 'Sister Churches' in ecumenical concerns. Monopolizing the 'fullness of ecclesial reality' the Roman Catholic ecumenical undertakings can result only in a futile and non-dialogical exclusivism. Chapter three deals with WCC's ecclesial approach and attitude to Christian unity and mission. WCC formed out of three different ecumenical movements outside the Catholic Church so far been focusing on the 'visible unity of the sister churches'. It has consequently resulted in more structuralism, institutionalism and ecclesio-centrism over and against meaningful mission of the churches. Chapter four enumerates the current challenges, problems and ambiguities in the field of ecumenism. Transition of culture and history from modernity to post-modernity, oscillation between visible institutional unity and Christianity as a non-institutional 'way of life', secular-spiritual confusion of authority, futility of attempt to arrive at perfect doctrinal consensus, and weakening of mainstream denominational structures and the flourishing of indigenous and Charismatic Christianity are the major challenges, problems and ambiguities the author highlights. The final chapter lays down a new ecumenical trajectory as a provisional way. This trajectory is characterized by a shift from oneness of meaning to plurality of meaning, from absolute to provisional, from centre to margins, and from orthodoxy to ortho-praxis.

This handbook of ecumenical theology reads the signs of the times. It is very much in line with the ecumenical sensibility of Vatican II and moves beyond the Council. It is highly advisable work for the readers of Christian theology irrespective of their denominational belongingness.

**Jijo Kurian Moolayil**

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